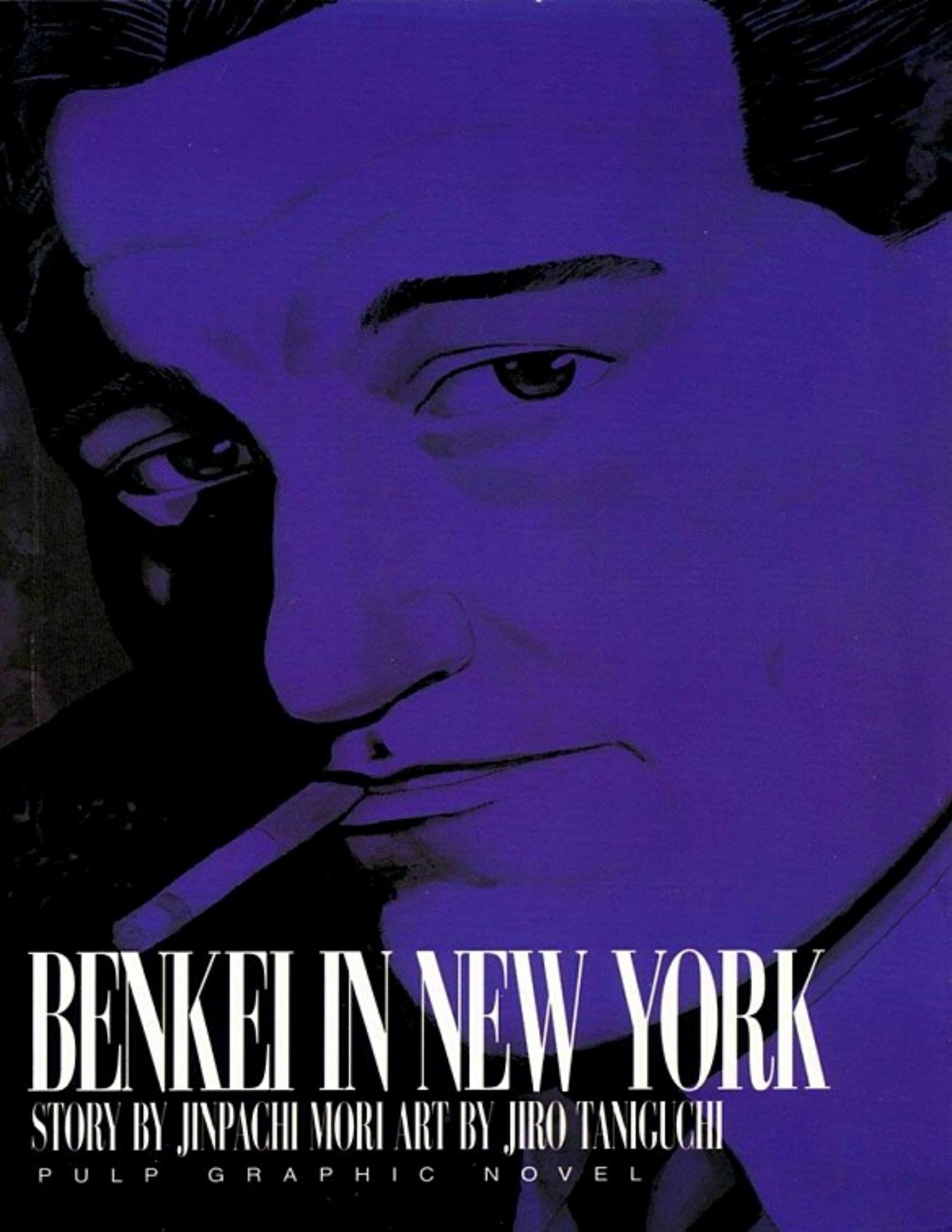
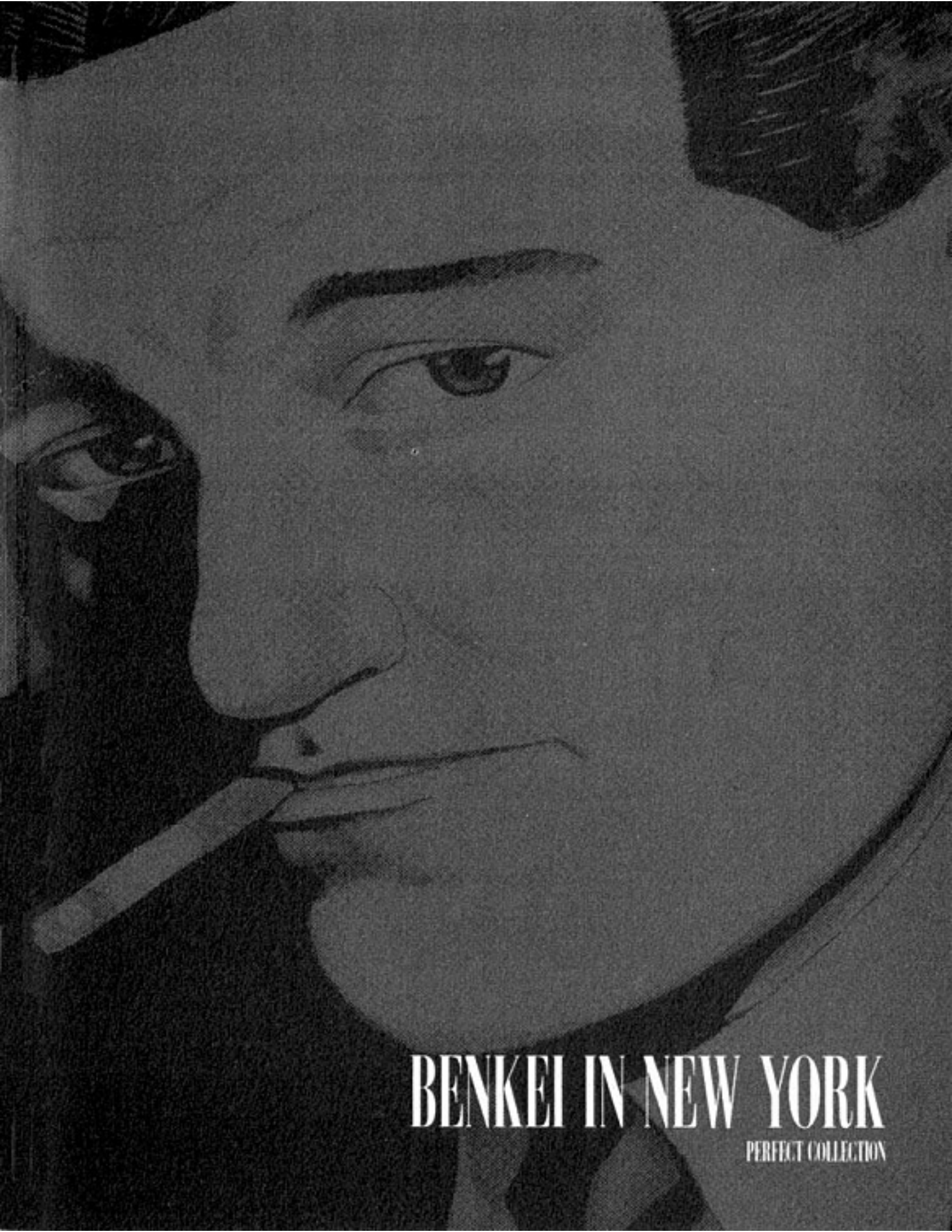


BENKEI IN NEW YORK

STORY BY JINPACHI MORI ART BY JIRO TANIGUCHI

PULP GRAPHIC NOVEL



BENKEI IN NEW YORK

PERFECT COLLECTION

BENKEI IN NEW YORK

STORY BY JINPACHI MORI ART BY JIRO TANIGUCHI

PULP GRAPHIC NOVEL

PERFECT
COLLECTION

STORY BY
JINPACHI MORI
ART BY
JIRO TANIGUCHI

This volume contains BENKEI IN NEW YORK installments from PULP Vol. 4, No. 7 through Vol. 5, No. 1 in their entirety.

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BAKUNE YOUNG VOL. 1

BANANA FISH VOL. 1
BANANA FISH VOL. 2
BANANA FISH VOL. 3
BANANA FISH VOL. 4

BLACK & WHITE VOL. 1
BLACK & WHITE VOL. 2
BLACK & WHITE VOL. 3

DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 1
DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 2
DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 3
DANCE TILL TOMORROW VOL. 4

HEARTBROKEN ANGELS VOL. 1
HEARTBROKEN ANGELS VOL. 2 (May 2001)

STRAIN VOL. 1
STRAIN VOL. 2
STRAIN VOL. 3
STRAIN VOL. 4

VOYEUR
VOYEURS, INC. VOL. 1
VOYEURS, INC. VOL. 2

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The Cry 95

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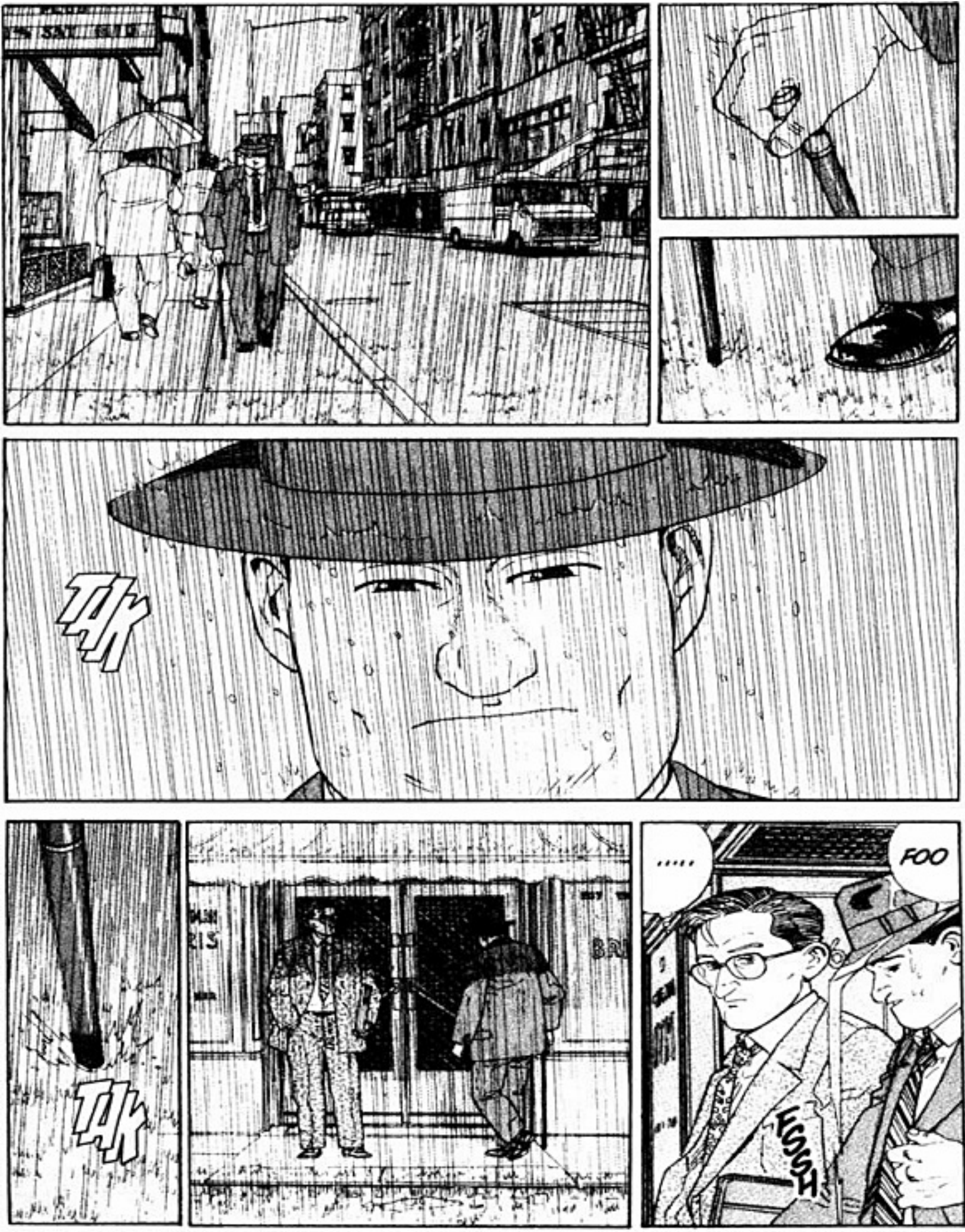
A Basement 195

Chapter 1: HAGGIS

KRAKK!
PANAM

FSSH
KRAK


TAK
TAK
.....
FOO
FSSH

PRETTY UNPLEASANT, EH?
WELL ...
I SHOULDN'T COMPLAIN.
...?
.....
I ASKED FOR THIS RAIN AND THUNDER.
HA HA.
I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE STILL INDIANS IN MANHATTAN.
I'M JAPANESE.
HUH. YOU'RE PRETTY HUMOROUS FOR ONE.
YOU DON'T LIKE THE RAIN?
NOT REALLY.
BUT IT'LL STOP SOON.

I LIKE RAIN.
ESPECIALLY WHEN IT THUNDERS.
.....
Fwik
Fwik
IT MAKES THIS TASTE BETTER.
Fwik
CARE TO JOIN ME?
HMM.
I THOUGHT IT'D BE A CHEAP BLEND, BUT THIS IS MALT SCOTCH.
WOW.
SPEY-SIDE.
CRAGGANMORE.
THAT'S RIGHT.

DAMN!
THUD
CRAPPY RENTAL CAR!

FOO
HM?
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
CLAK
SCRCH!

PLOK
IT STOPPED RAINING.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
BEN-KEI?
BENKEI.
UH-HUH.
I RUN A BASEMENT BAR NO ONE GOES TO IN THE VILLAGE.
YOU SERVE THIS KIND OF WHISKEY THERE?
WE HAVE ANYTHING YOU'D WANT.
THAT'S GREAT.
YOU SURE ABOUT THAT?
WELL, I KNOW MY CUSTOMERS.
.....
I SHARED A DRINK WITH YOU.
I FIGURE YOU'LL BRING ME BUSINESS.
YOU'RE A SMART BUSINESS-MAN.

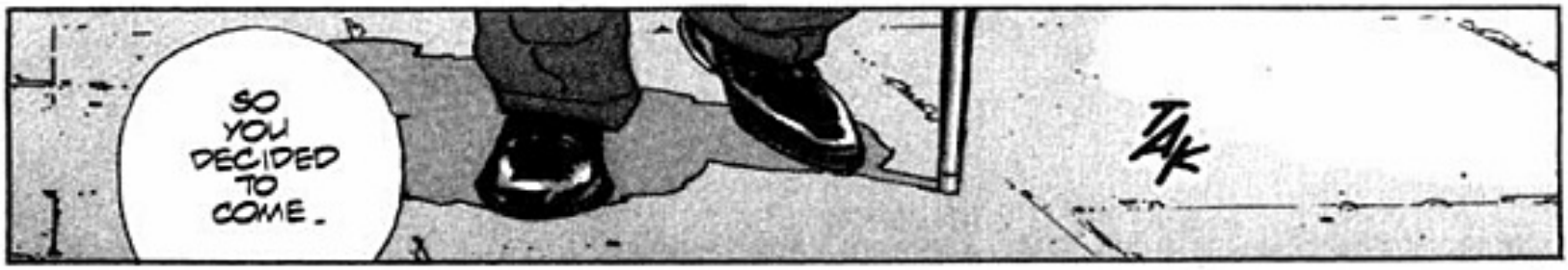
GIVE ME A CALL WHEN YOU'RE IN THE VILLAGE.
I'LL MEET YOU.
BENKEI
PHONE
WHY?
I DON'T HAVE A SIGN.
EDINBURGH SCO
KLAK
TASTE CAN NEVER ESCAPE THE WEB OF MEMORY ...

BAGS
HOW'S BUSINESS?
GOOD.
ONLY FIVE STOLEN APPLES.
chmp
GOOD.
Mnch Mnch
YOU HAVE SOME BUSINESS YOURSELF.
THAT ITALIAN'S BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
FWIK

BENKEI, WE ALREADY HAVE BUYERS...
THE ORGANIZATION STEALS A VAN GOGH OR A PICASSO...
WE MAKE FORGERIES AND SELL THEM TO MODERATELY WEALTHY COLLECTORS.
IF WE COVER OUR TRACKS IT'S A GOOD BUSINESS.
BUT ...
TIMING IS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE.
.....

ONCE WE AGREE ON A DEAL...
...IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DELIVER THE PRODUCT TO OUR CLIENTS WHILE THEY'RE STILL DROOLING.
YOU SOUND LIKE YOU RUN A PIZZA JOINT.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
SELLING PIZZAS IS HOW I LEARNED EVERYTHING ABOUT NEW YORK.
I'LL MEET THE DEAD-LINE.
THAT'S NOT THE POINT.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE IN THAT DANGEROUS LINE OF BUSINESS.
THIS IS GOOD WORK.
I'M A MULTI-BUSINESS-MAN.
AIEE!
A TOKEN OF OUR FRIEND-SHIP?
I JUST DON'T WANT YOU TO HURT YOUR HANDS.
THEN AT LEAST CARRY THIS.

PORT AUTHORITY
MOS TECHNICAL
Wholesale
BOOKS


SO YOU DECIDED TO COME.
TAK

I COULDN'T FORGET THE TASTE OF THAT WHISKEY.
THERE AREN'T THAT MANY OCCASIONS WHEN ONE REALLY NEEDS A DRINK.

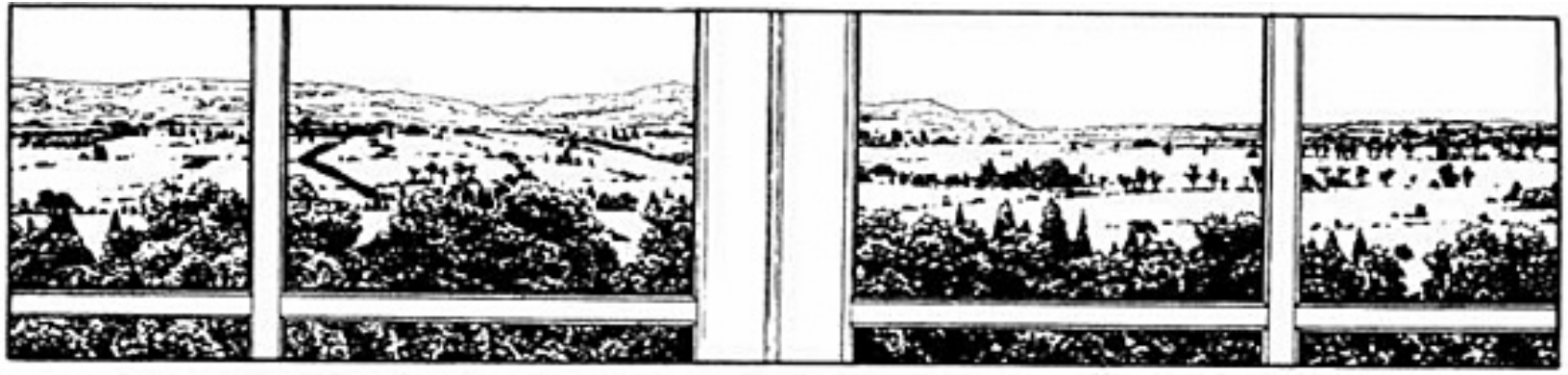
YOU'RE A PHILOSOPHER.
I BECAME ONE WHEN I STARE TOO MUCH AT SOMEONE DRINKING.

.....

LET'S GO.
TAK

I'VE NEVER BEEN TO SUCH A STRANGE BAR.
THERE'S NO JUKE-BOX.
AND NO CHATTING.
BUT WE HAVE THE DRINKS YOU NEED.
LONG TIME SINCE I HAD A DRINK LIKE THIS.
LAST TIME WAS IN SCOTLAND.
THAT SO?
IN 1968.
I WAS TWENTY YEARS OLD.
GOOD TRIP?
YOU KIDDING ?
THE VIETNAM WAR WAS AT ITS PEAK.
I WENT TO DODGE THE DRAFT.
UNDER MY FATHER'S ORDERS.
.....
GLUK
THAT'S WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE ASHAMED OF IT.
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW? YOU'RE JAPANESE.

THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN AMERICA ALSO HAPPEN IN JAPAN.
PEOPLE IN NEW YORK ARE TOO CONSCIOUS OF RACE.
I'M A SECOND-RATE NEIL SIMON.
HA HA HA
HUH.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
WERE YOU A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR?
YOU KIDDING?
I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO DIE.
THAT'S STRAIGHT-FORWARD.
BUT...
YOU COULDN'T HAVE DODGED THE DRAFT JUST BY TAKING A TRIP.
THAT'S RIGHT. I DIDN'T WANT TO DIE, BUT MY FATHER DIDN'T WANT TO BE DISGRACED BY A SON WHO DIDN'T GO.
.....
PWIF
AS YOU SAID, IT'S WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE.
HM.
TUG



"WE HAVE SOME BAD NEWS. YOUR DRAFT NOTICE HAS FINALLY ARRIVED. NEEDLESS TO SAY, YOUR MOTHER AND I HAVE BEEN DISTRESSED TO PUT IT MILDLY.
"I DON'T WANT TO LOSE MY SUCCESSOR. I WAS PLANNING ON HAVING YOU INHERIT MY BUSINESS TEN YEARS DOWN THE LINE.

"I HAVE A SOLUTION, THOUGH ...
"GET INJURED, BILL!"

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

CAN YOU TAKE ME INTO TOWN?
MY CAR BROKE DOWN AND I NEED TO MAKE A PHONE CALL.

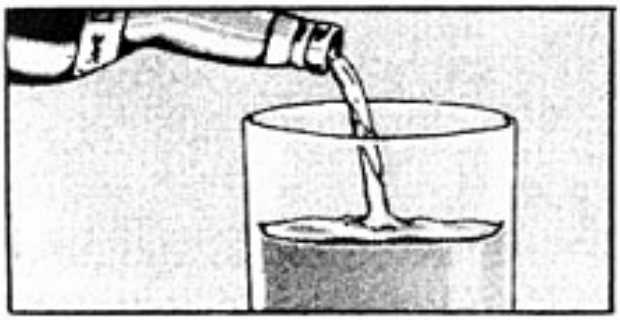
"TAKE A TRIP TO SCOTLAND. AND GET INTO AN ACCIDENT. THAT'LL SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS!
"GET INJURED, BILL!"
GLUG
GLUG
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME HAGGIS?
...?
YOU HAVE HAGGIS?
I MADE IT.

TAK
WOW.
I'M IMPRESSED. YOU MUST BE A GOURMET CHEF.
IT'S SIMPLE.
YOU JUST STUFF SOME LIVER AND HEART INTO INTESTINES.
THIS IS THE ONLY DECENT THING TO EAT IN SCOTLAND.
SNICH SNICH
MNCH MNCH
HMM.
TASTES GOOD.
I USED GOOD INGRED-IENTS.
IT BRINGS BACK A LOT OF MEMORIES.
THAT'S WHY I MADE IT.
WHAT?

CHK

TAK
TAK

I'LL HAVE THE SAME AS THIS GENTLE-MAN.
SURE.
.....

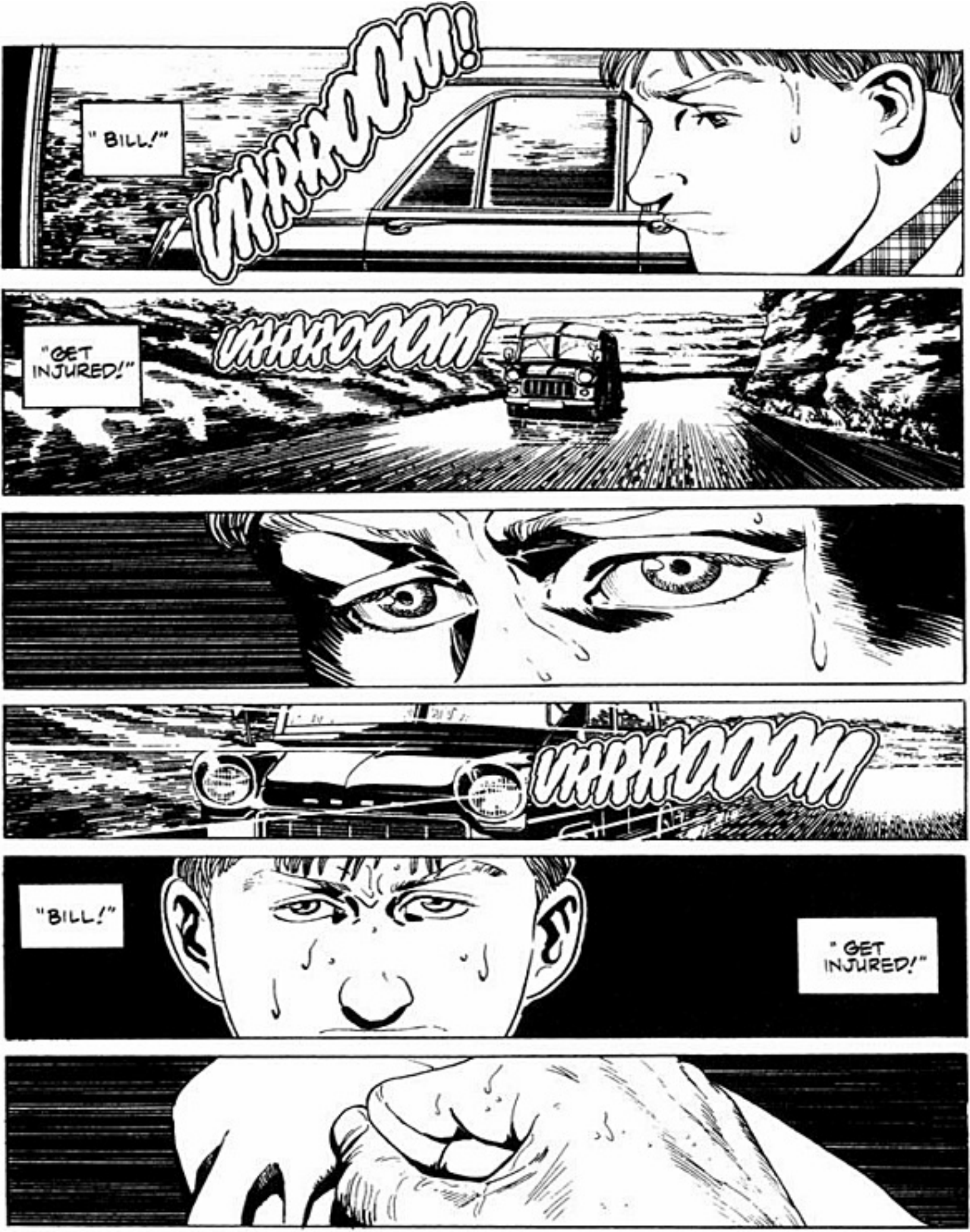


.....

TO OUR MEMORIES.

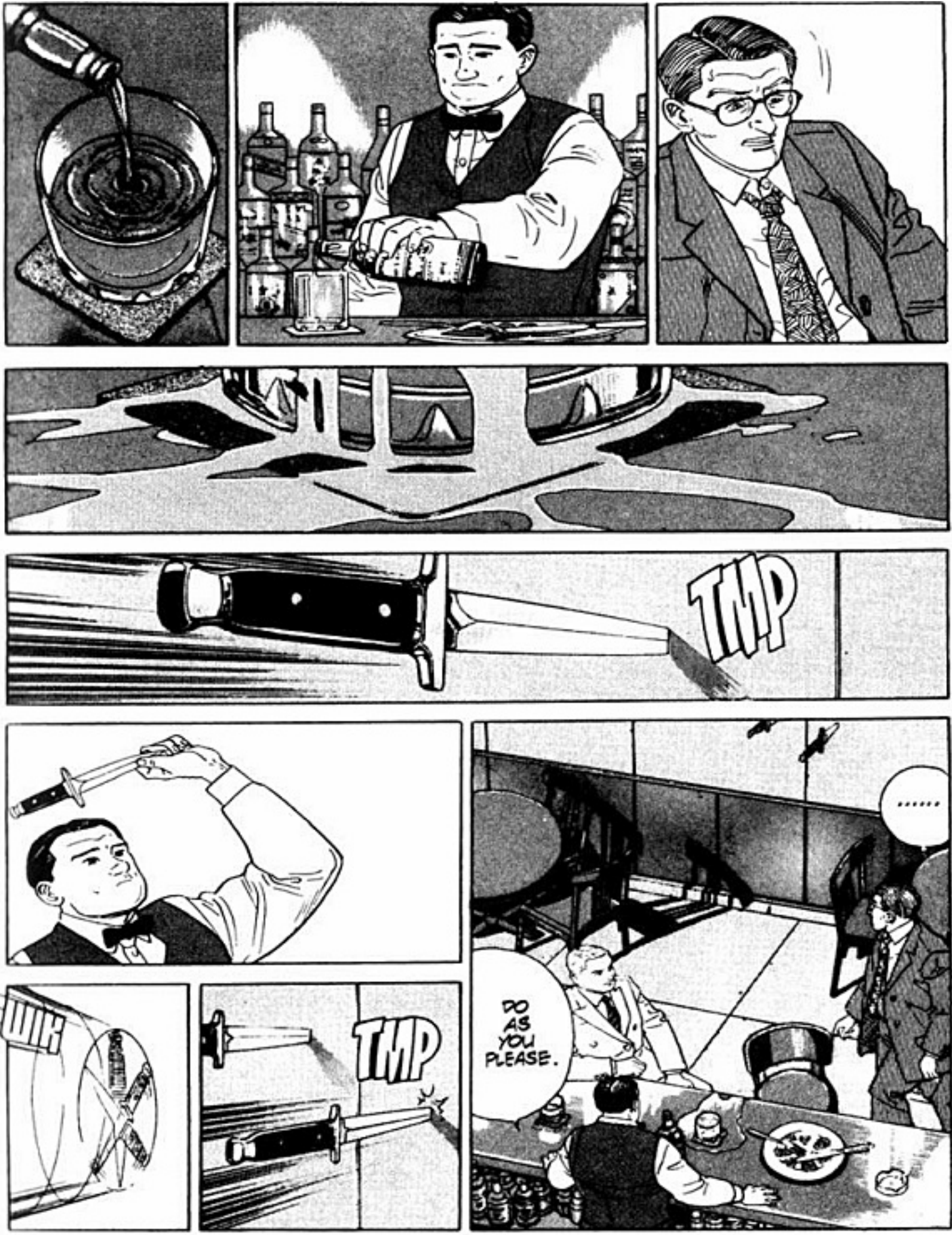
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
YOU MUST NOT HAVE FELT GOOD ABOUT...
AVOIDING WAR AND STILL KILLING SOMEONE.
.....
Scotch Whisky
BRAGG
NO!
THAT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
ARE YOU AMERICAN?
YES. I'M FROM THE EAST COAST.

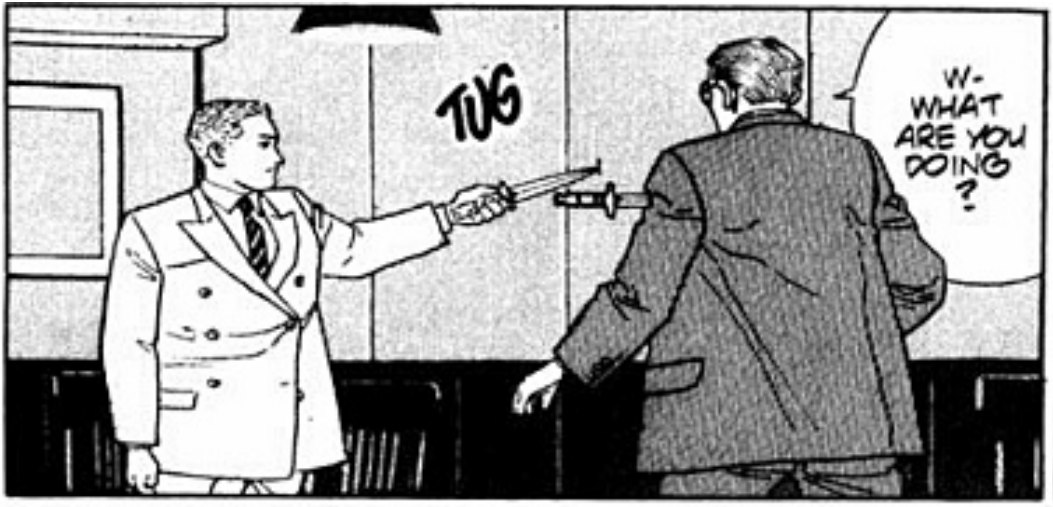
AMERICANS ARE LUCKY.
YOU BECAME INDEPENDENT FROM ENGLAND.
HMM. I SEE...
THE CULLODEN WAR STILL WEIGHS HEAVILY ON THE SCOTS, HUH?
THE MEN WHO FOUGHT IN THAT WAR WERE COURAGEOUS WARRIORS.
WHAT'S SO NOBLE ABOUT DYING?
WHISKEY DOESN'T SUIT A COWARD LIKE YOU.
12
IT'S SILLY... TO DIE FOR A COUNTRY...
IT'S A BARBAROUS IDEA...


" BILL!"
VRRROOM!
"GET INJURED!"
VRRROOOOM
VRRROOOOM
"BILL!"
" GET INJURED!"

VRROOOM!!
EEE
KRIK
SKRRCE

THAT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
THAT WOMAN LOST CONTROL OF THE WHEEL IN THE RAIN.
THANKS TO HER, I BROKE MY LEG.
THAT'S RIGHT. THERE WAS SOME RISK.
WITH HEAD-ON COLLISIONS, THE CHANCES OF A REAR-SEAT PASSENGER DYING ARE LOW.
.....
LOOK AT THE GENTLEMAN NEXT TO YOU.
.....
I WAS SITTING IN THE FRONT PASSEN-GER'S SEAT.
!
TH-THAT CAN'T BE.
EVEN IF IT WERE TRUE, YOU WOULDN'T REMEMBER. YOU WERE A BABY, WHO'D BELIEVE YOU?
CLANG
WELL, THE WHISKEY'LL TELL THE TRUTH.


TMP
.....
DO AS YOU PLEASE.
FWIK
TMP


TUG
W-WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHO ARE YOU?

A DEALER IN REVENGE.
IN JAPAN, WE CALL THIS "ADAUCHI," A VENDETTA.

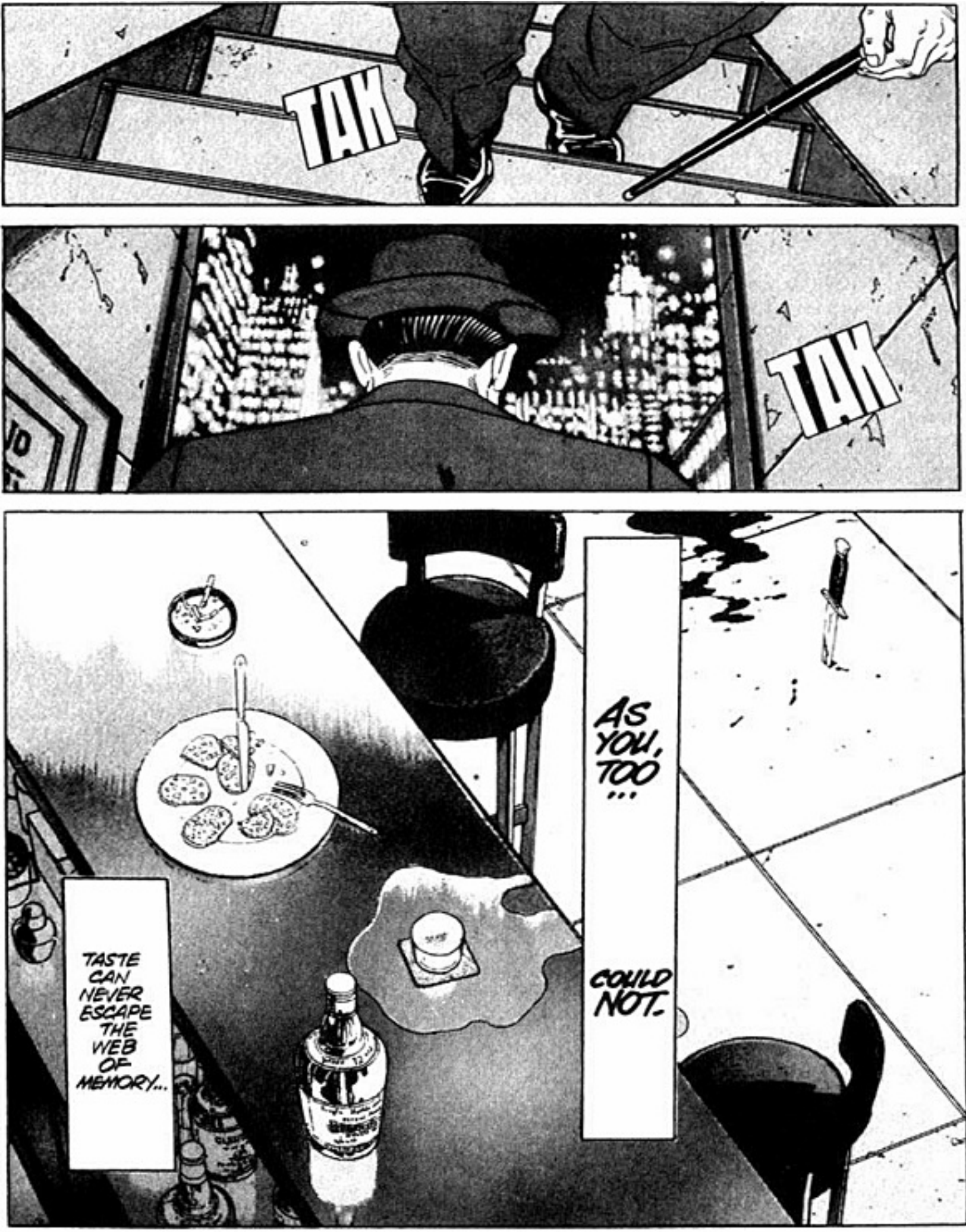
TUG
DAMN IT!

huf
huf
CHAK

THE GAME IS FAIR NOW.

THE HAGGIS YOU ATE WAS MADE OF...

YOUR DAUGHTER'S HEART AND LIVER.
UR...
N-
NO!
URR
ARR
URRR
GLUG
huf
huf
huf


TAK
TAK
AS YOU, TOO ...
COULD NOT.
TASTE CAN NEVER ESCAPE THE WEB OF MEMORY...

"*Benkei in New York* is a short, sharp shock of manga noir." —Greg Rucka, author of *Batman* and *Whiteout*

"Diabolically well-told, occasionally harrowing, *Benkei* is better than 96% of the crime fiction coming out of America right now."

—Warren Ellis, author of *Planetary* and *Ministry of Space*

Manga doesn't get much more *noir* than this. Benkei is just another expatriate Japanese artist living in the Big Apple. Or so it appears. As these "diabolical hard-boiled stories" show, surfaces aren't always what they seem. Flashbacks delve into sordid, secret past lives, and old scores, long festering, emerge without warning, asking to be settled. And Benkei's secret? Maybe it's just that he's the only artist in town who's isn't having fantasies of being a hitman-for-hire. He is one. Each self-contained episode in this complete *Benkei* collection is a tightly plotted, beautifully rendered, psychologically harrowing ride into the heart of urban darkness. Hard-boiled tales of revenge, rendered in the tight-lipped, fine-line style of Jiro Taniguchi, one of the creators of Viz's *Hotel Harbour View.*

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Chapter 2: HOOK

FOOH
WOW!

SHH

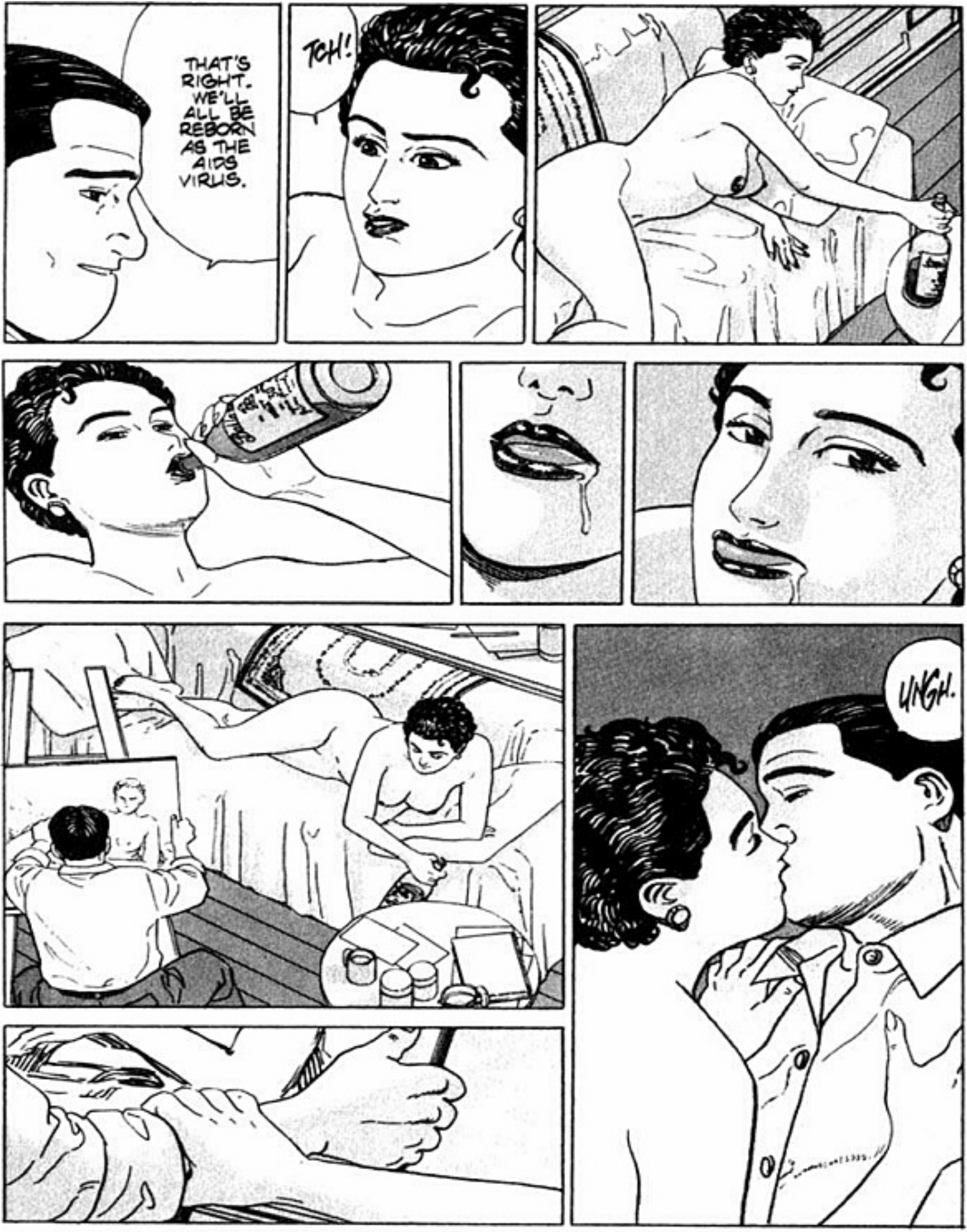
WHERE YOU GOING?
TOK
TOK
SHOPPING.
GRABBING A SALAD AT THE KOREAN'S?
AT THE MARKET.
MARKET?
AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?

FRESH
SCAPED

YOU RUN A RESTAURANT?
KINDA.

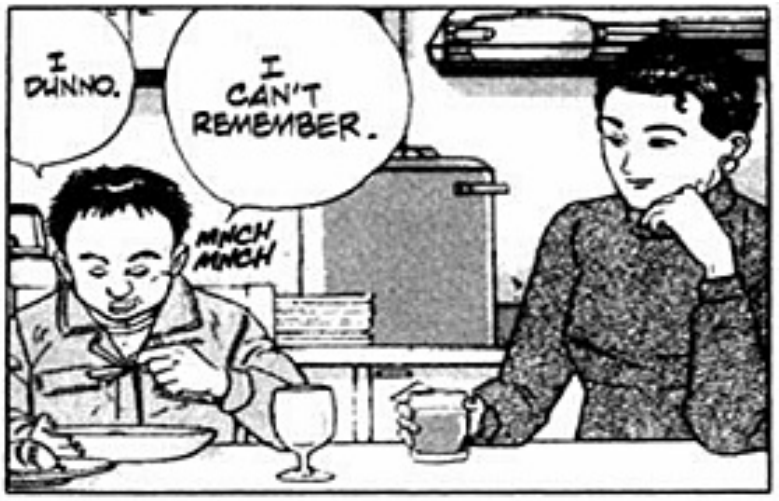
NO CREDIT
HOOK?
YES.
NO CREDIT.
TEN DOLLARS.
THOK

HOPE YOU'RE NOT DIS-APPOINTED.
IF I'D KNOWN...
...I'D HAVE PICKED ANOTHER CUSTOMER.
SORRY...
...BUT THIS GUY'S BEEN IMPOTENT SINCE THE NINETIES.
'CAUSE YOU WANT US TO END UP ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST?
HA...
Y'KNOW WHAT?
I BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION.


THAT'S RIGHT. WE'LL ALL BE REBORN AS THE AIDS VIRUS.
TCH!
UNGH.

SWISH
HA.
YOU LIAR.
TAP
TAP
HE LIKES TO USE THE FIRE ESCAPE.
GOT A GUEST.
THIS IS THE FOURTH FLOOR!

MNCH MNCH
SO WHERE'S YOUR HOME?


I DUNNO.
I CAN'T REMEMBER.
MNCH MNCH

FOO FOO

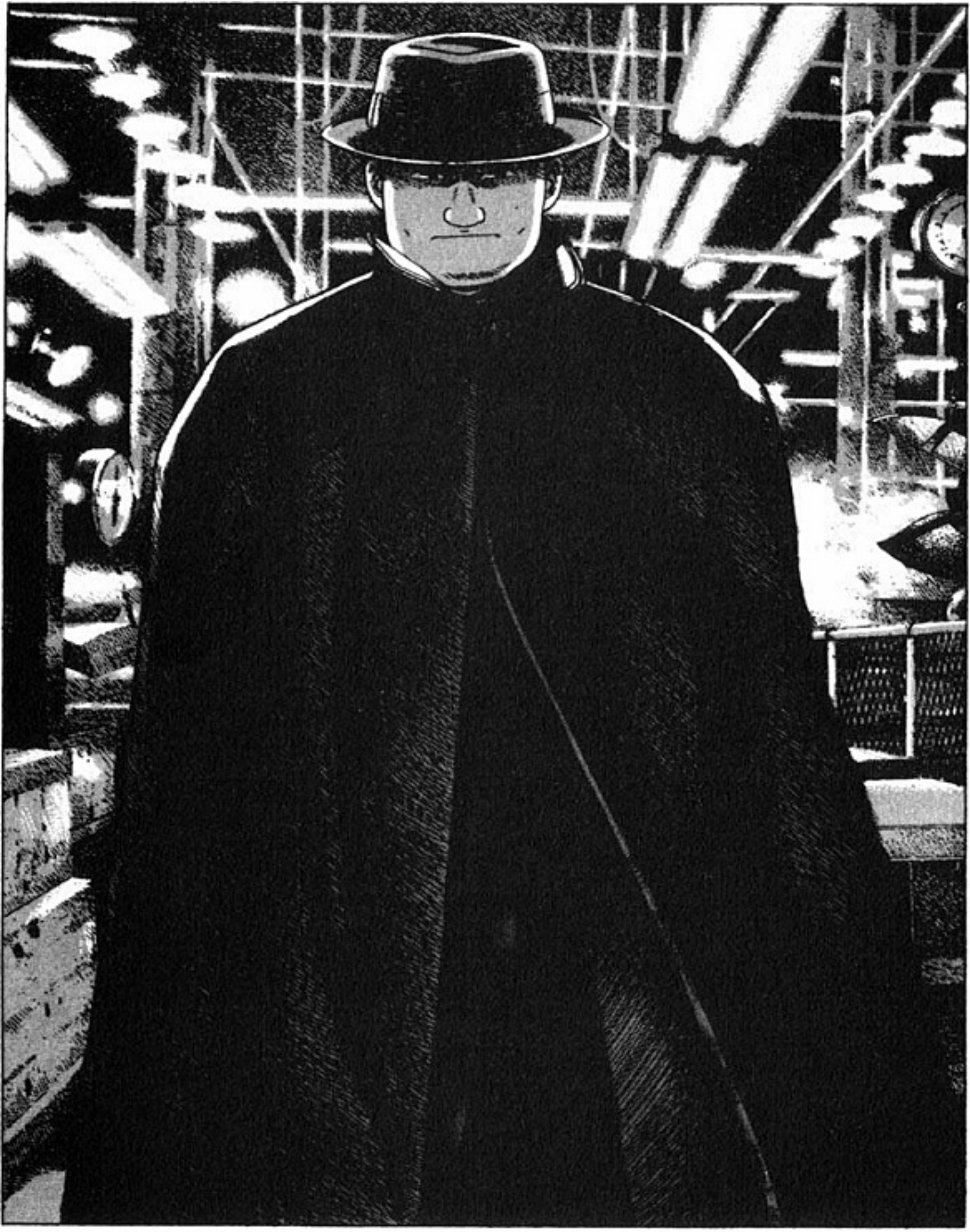
YOU EAT A LOT FOR A SHRIMP.

CANAL STREET'S WHERE IT'S AT.
THE JAPANESE TOURISTS ORDER WAY TOO MUCH FOOD, SO THE GARBAGE BINS THERE ARE A TREASURE TROVE.

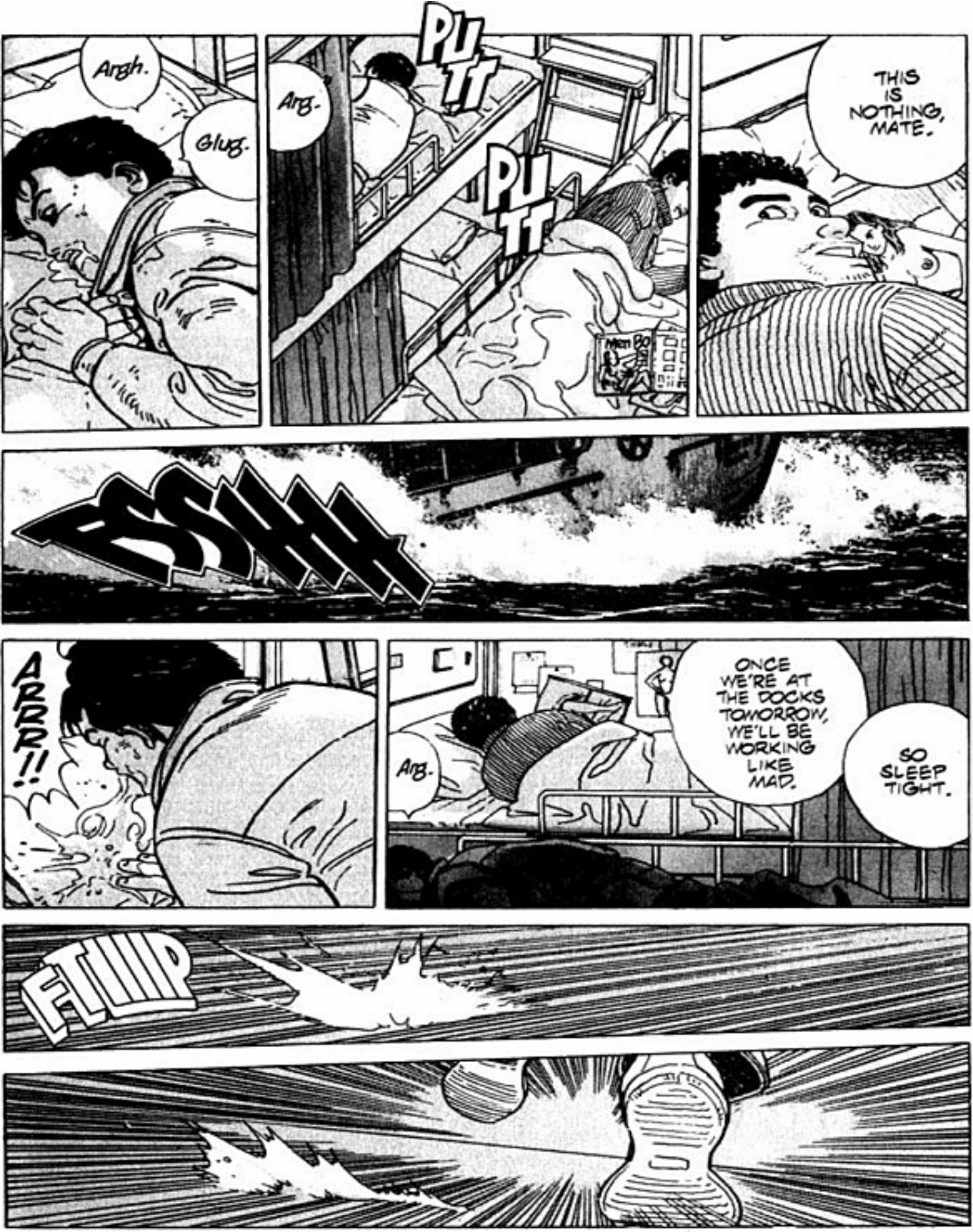
TWO DAYS AGO I ATE A SHITLOAD OF CRABS AT A CHINESE RESTAURANT.

WHY'D YOU DRAW ME?
NOTHING BETTER TO DO.
JUST KILLING TIME.
YOU COOK FOR THAT KID FOR THE SAME REASON, I BET.
...
YOU THINK YOU'RE MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE OR SOMETHING?
YOU MIGHT BE STANDING TALL NOW, BUT ONE DAY YOU'LL BE THE ONE OUT ON THE STREETS.
THAT MIGHT BE NICE.
FIRE!

YOU BASTARD!
GO DROWN IN YOUR SORROWS, YOU SELF-INDULGENT PRICK.
YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL BODY.
HA!
FSH!
SAVE IT!
COME BY AGAIN.
CHAK
HELL NO!
CLICK



MR. YOSHIDA ?
IF I'M CORRECT, YOU WERE ON THE FISHING TRAWLER FUKUIN FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.
.....
WWWOOOM


Argh.
Glug.
PU TT
Arg.
PU TT
THIS IS NOTHING, MATE.
PSSHH
ARRR!!
Arg.
ONCE WE'RE AT THE DOCKS TOMORROW, WE'LL BE WORKING LIKE MAD.
SO SLEEP TIGHT.
FLIIIP

Huf
Huf
Huf

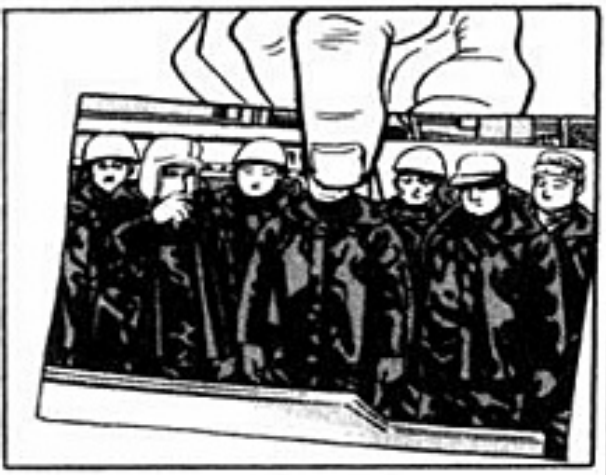
Huf
Huf
Huf
Haah
TOP FISH
Huh
Huh
10K
AIEEE!
TOP FISH
REMEMBER NOW ?
FSHAA

FWOOSH
I'M GOIN' HOME.
WHAT?
HOW YOU GONNA DO THAT?
GOTTA GO.
BURR BURR
EVERYONE MAKES FUN OF ME.
CALM DOWN.
HEY, SNAP OUT OF IT!
ESPECIALLY YOU!

H-HOLD ON...
WE'LL GO WAKE UP THE CAPTAIN AND TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT.
NO!
FSHAA
ARGH!
EHHH
OOOO

HOW DID YOU?
TOP FISH
YOU WERE SENDING HIS MOTHER...
...MONEY FROM AMERICA.

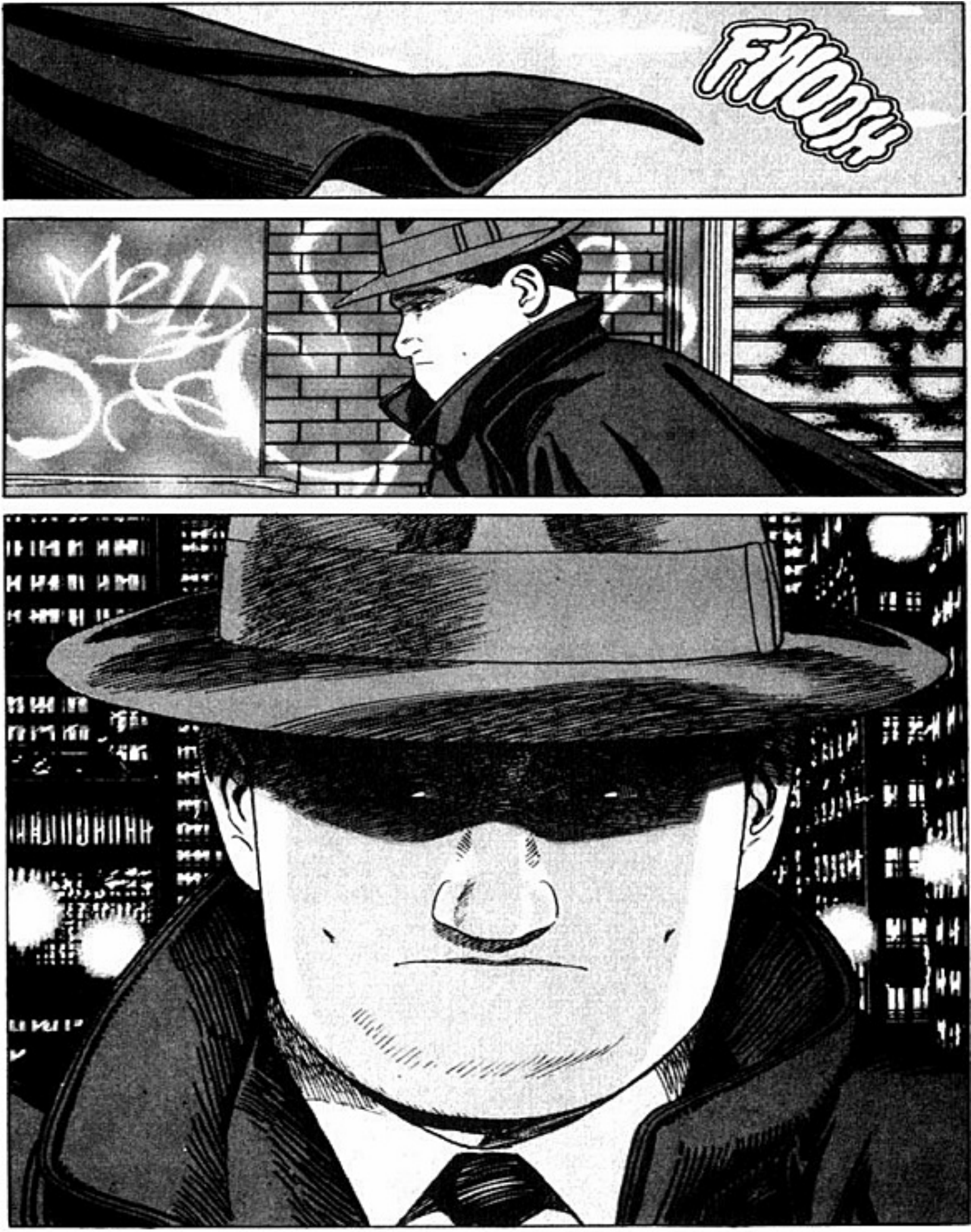
B-BUT ...
...HOW DID YOU KNOW IT WAS ME?
TAKE A LOOK.

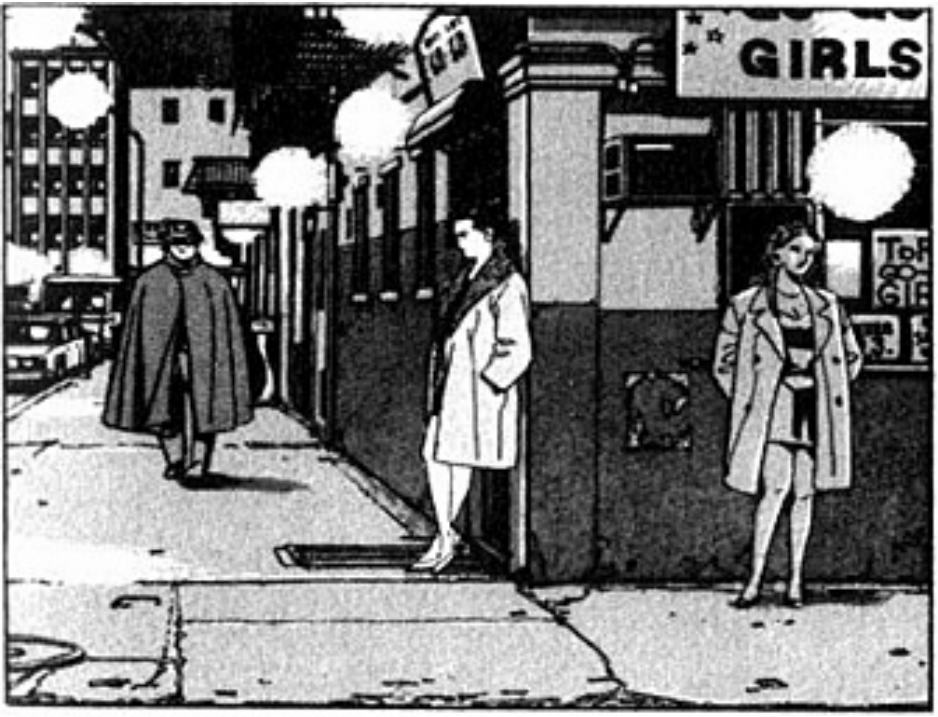


I SETTLE VENDETTAS.
URRR...

I WAS SORRY! I TRIED TO ATONE!
I WAS TOLD TO RETURN THIS.
IT'S THE MONEY YOU SENT.
.....
URRGH.
IT WAS THE SEA.
IT WAS ...
...THE SEA'S FAULT.
YOU PATHETIC WRETCH!
SHE WAS HAUNTED BY HER SON'S DEATH. SHE TOOK IT TO HER GRAVE.

FIK
RM
RM
A-
A-
ARGH
...
THAT
WILL
BE
YOUR
SCAR.
SO
YOU'LL
REMEMBER
EACH AND
EVERY
DAY
WHAT YOU
DID.


FWOOSH


GIRLS

GOING SOME-WHERE?

DUNNO ...
.....

YOU LIKE THE NIGHT?

IT'S MORE HONEST THAN THE DAY.

.....

HEY!
GOT ANY SPARE CHANGE?
FWISH
SORRY, I ONLY GOT A HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL.
HA HA...
WELL...
GUESS WE'LL BE GOING THEN.

TMP
TMP
TMP TMP
TMP TMP
CLAK

Huf
Huf
Huf
YOU BACK NOW?
YEAH, I'M BACK.
FHSH

I COULD TELL YOU WERE GOING SOMEWHERE YOU DIDN'T BELONG.
YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING INVOLVED WITH A FREAK.
HA, WELL MAYBE I AM.

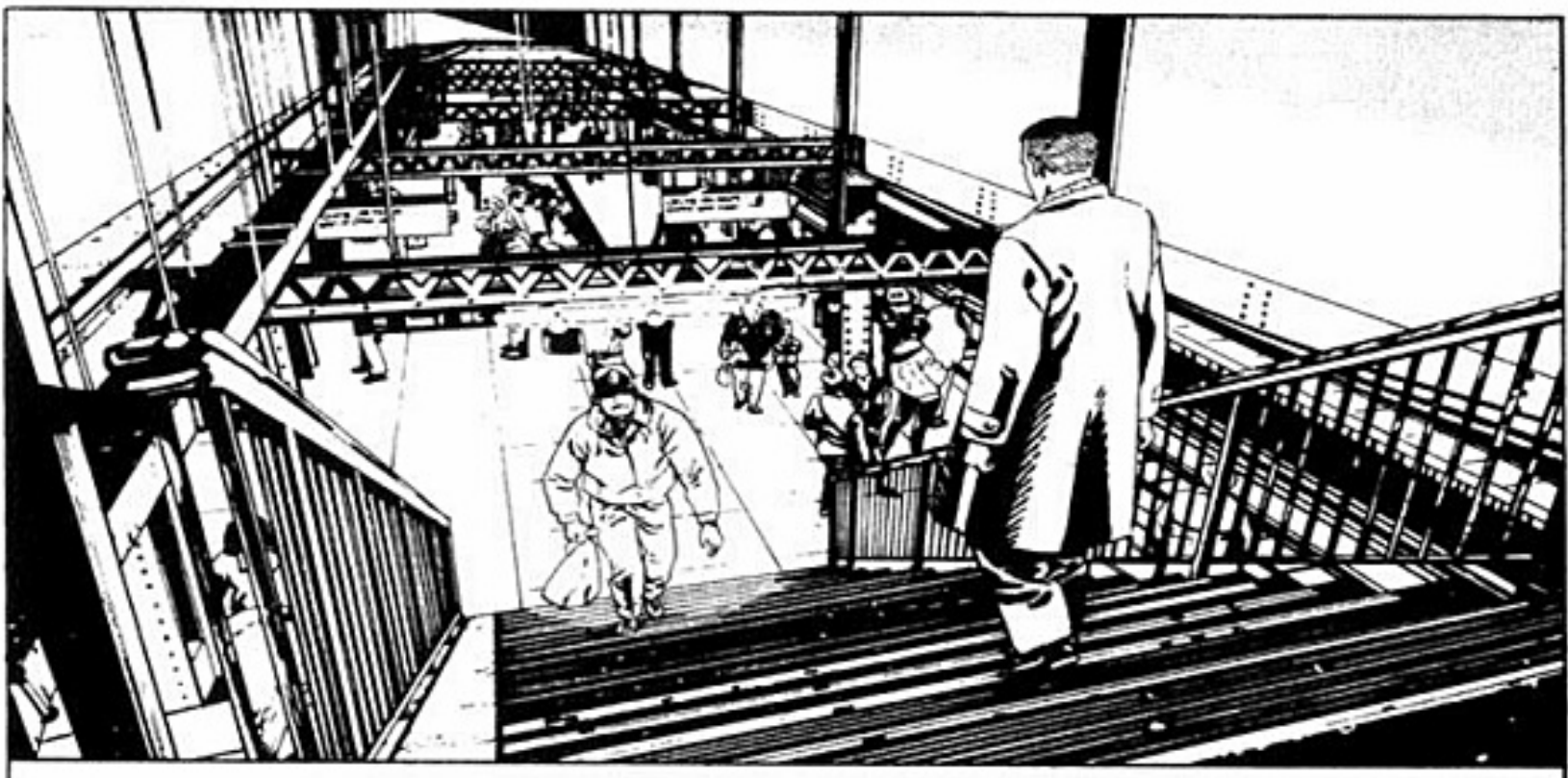
Chapter 3: THROW BACK

2:27 P.M. GRAND CENTRAL STATION

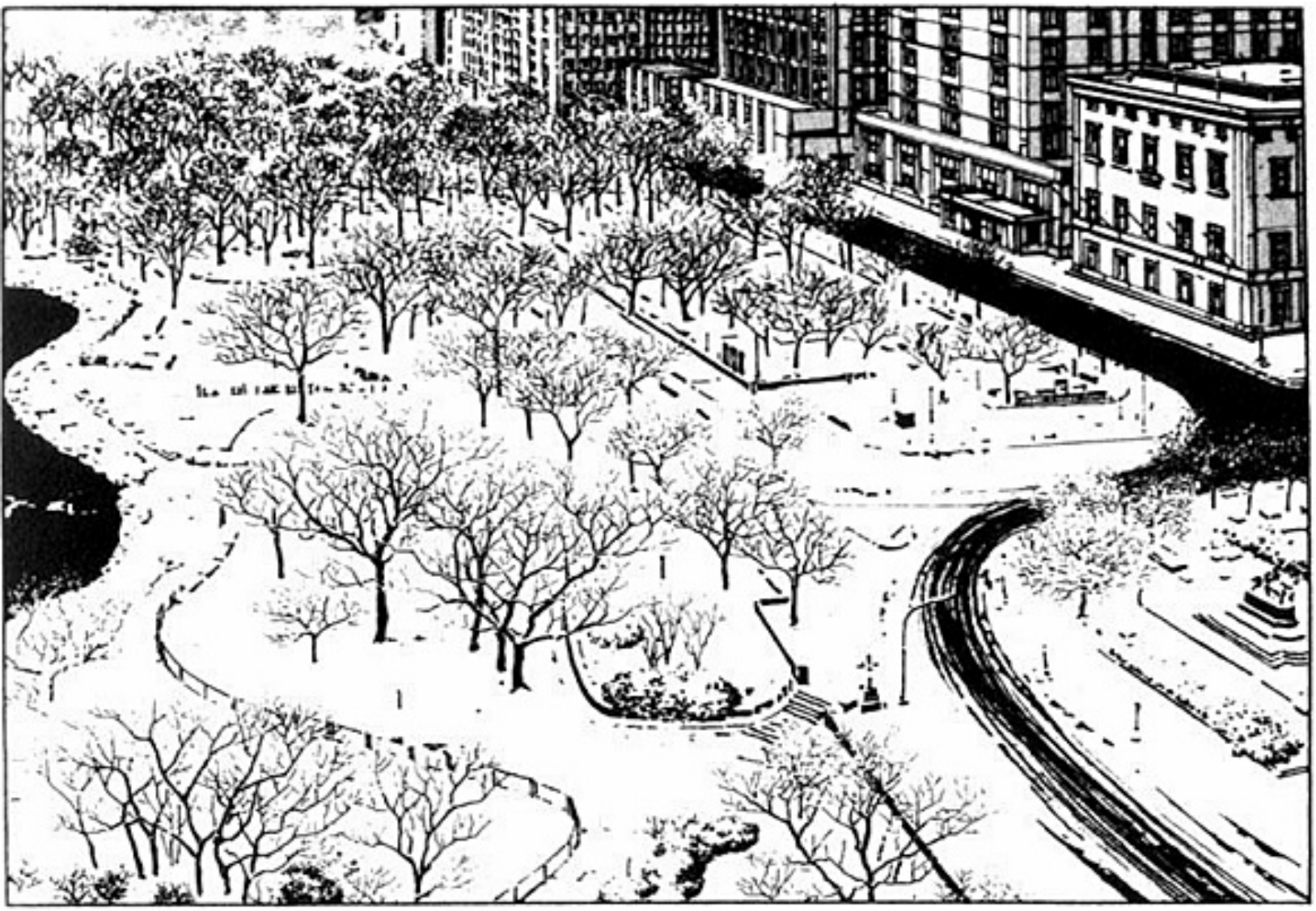
RECORD-BREAKING SNOWFALL, BUT THIS STATION POSSESSES THE VITALITY OF A THIRD-WORLD MARKETPLACE.

MANHATTAN. IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HERE. THERE'S NOTHING TO SELL IN THIS COUNTRY... AT LEAST NOTHING FOR BEGINNERS.

IN THE CROWDS, YOU CAN NO LONGER SEE THE ANGELS OR GODS. BUT FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO FORGET THE HAUNTING EFFECT OF TIME, IT'S PERFECT. THE YOUNG CAN SWEAT, THE RICH CAN TEST THEIR RICHES.



LOOK UP THE STREET NUMBER AND STEP INTO AN ALLEY. AS LONG AS YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, YOU'LL FIND YOUR GAME.



2:47 P.M. CENTRAL PARK.

IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE THE ASIAN MAN BEGAN FOLLOWING ME. I CAN FEEL...

...HIS MURDEROUS IMPULSE.

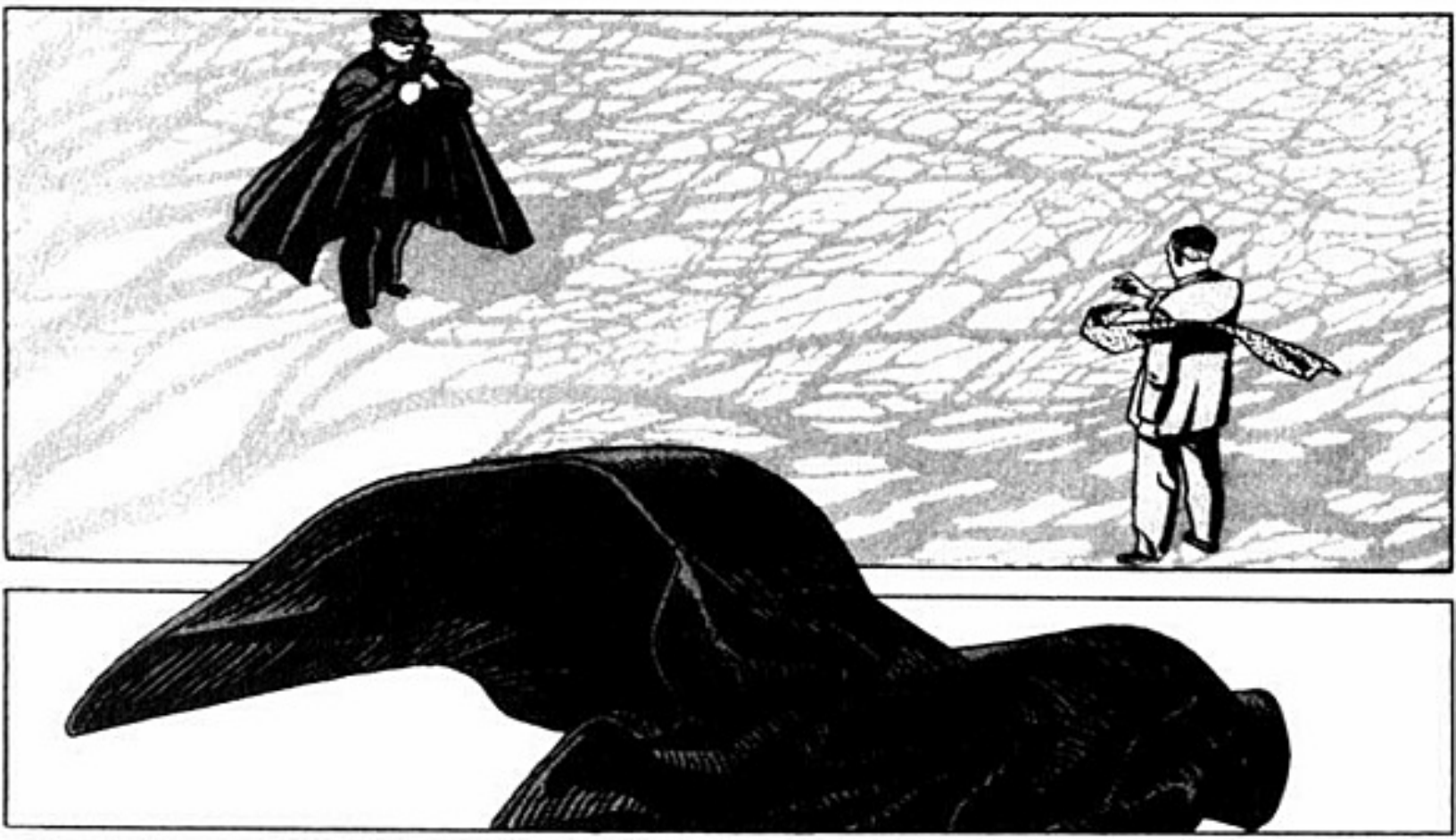
MURDER... A PRIMITIVE DESIRE...

DESIRES OUR BUSINESS HAS OBLITERATED. WE NO LONGER KNOW HOW TO EXPRESS OUR PRIMITIVE NATURE.

WE'RE ONLY CAPABLE OF FOLLOWING SYSTEMS. WE PASSIVELY ACCEPT RESULTS.

AND YET THIS MAN HERE...

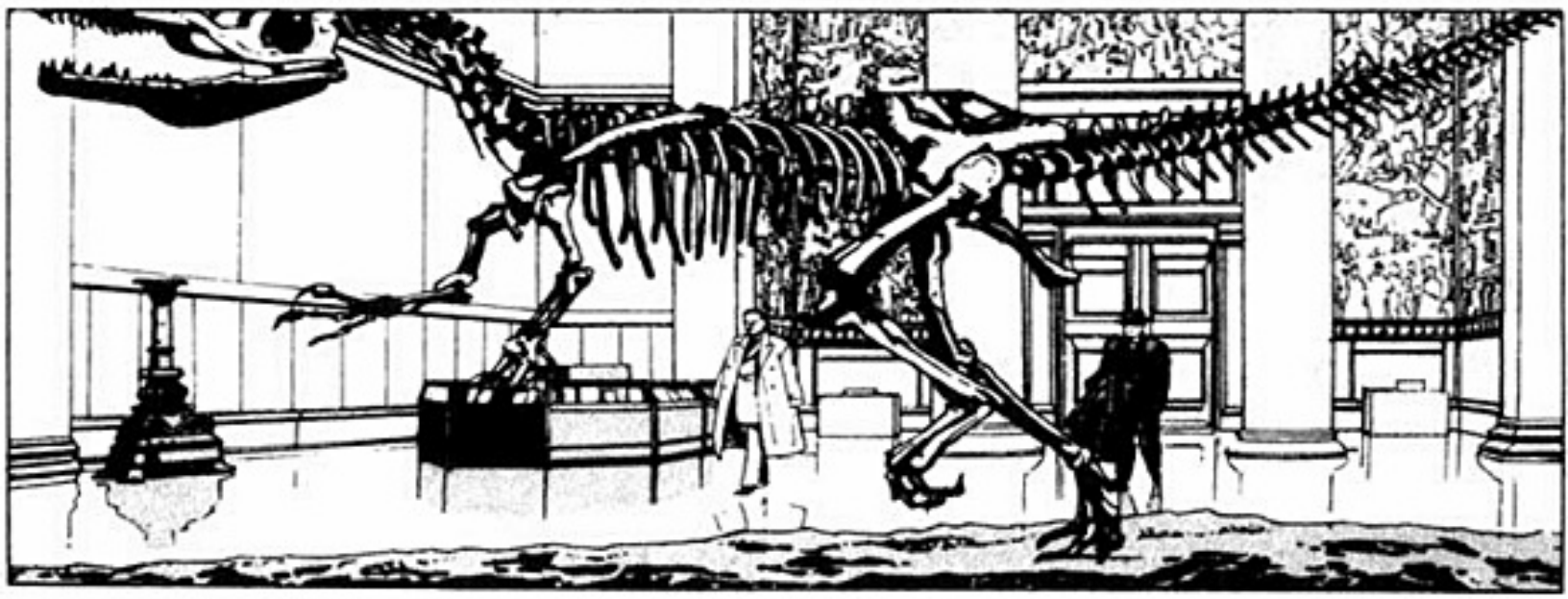
HE'S TRYING TO SURVIVE ALONE.



"WHERE DO WE FINISH?"
"WHERE THERE'S GAME."

3:36 P.M. THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

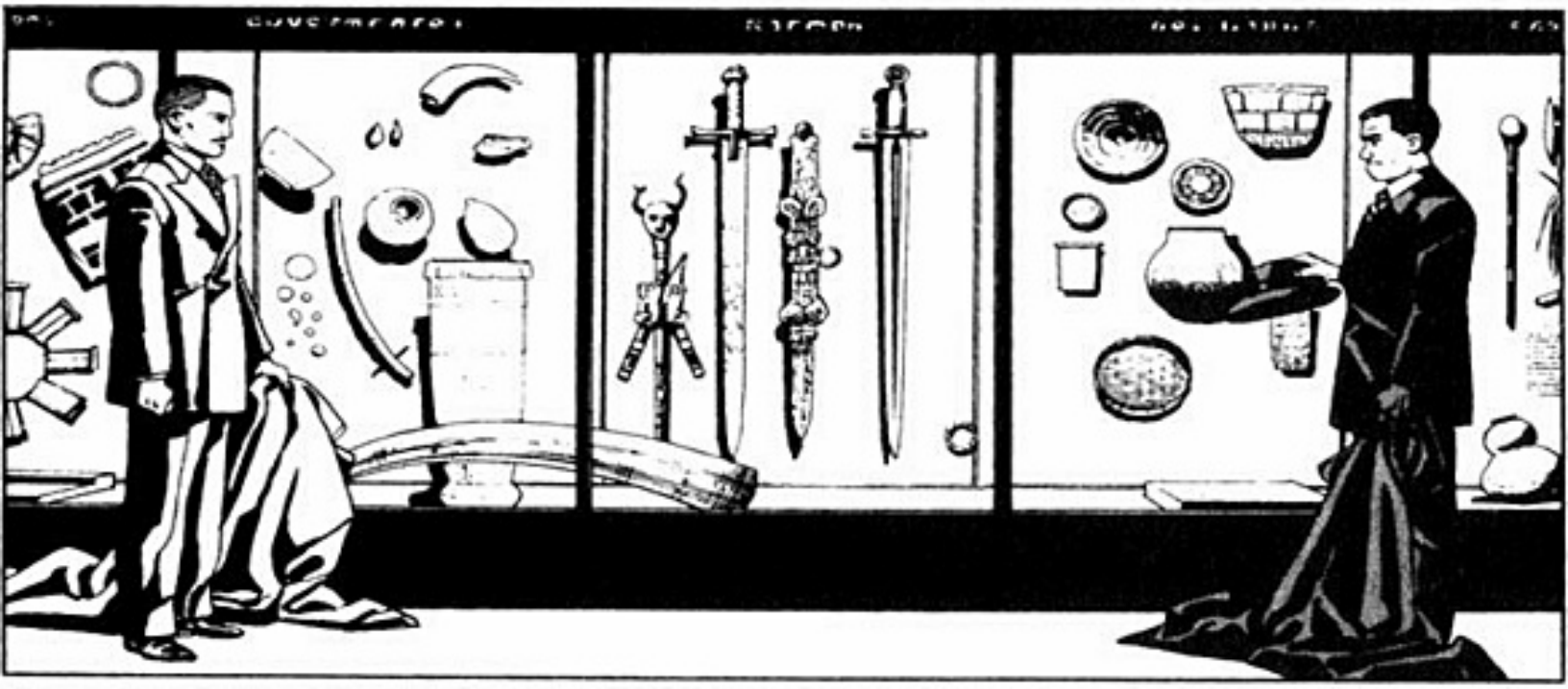
A NOBLE GRAVEYARD...



COUNTLESS SIMULATIONS OF LIFE SHINE IN THE DARKNESS...

IN HARMONY WITH HUMAN CIVILIZATION...

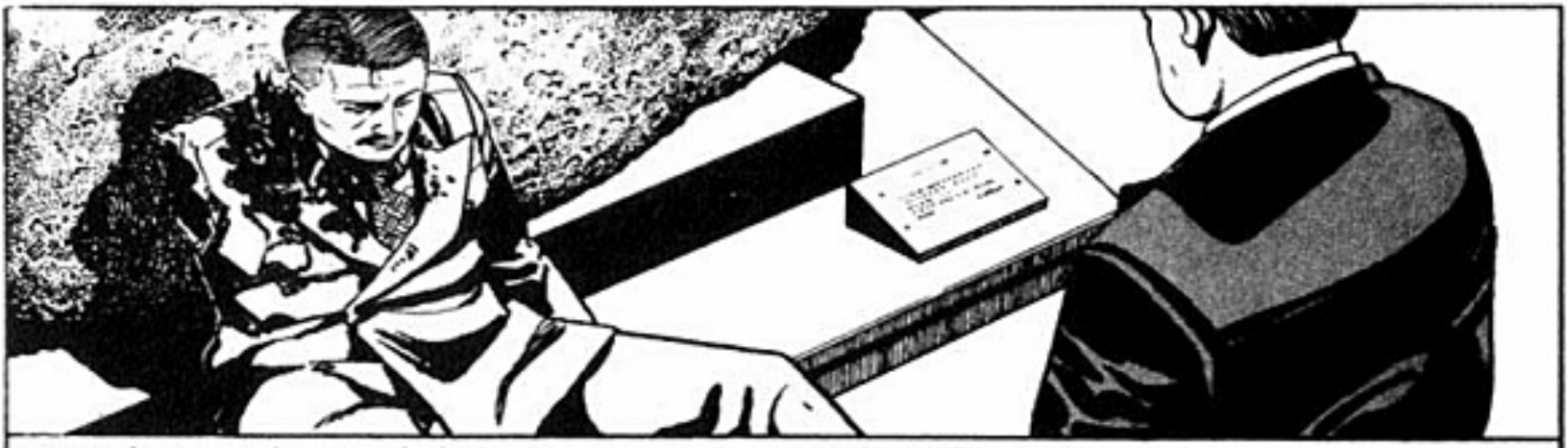
TIME LOST...



MY GRANDFATHER ONCE KILLED A MAN IN OKINAWA. MY FATHER, A MAN IN KOREA. I'VE NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY, BUT...

...TODAY I'LL KNOW.

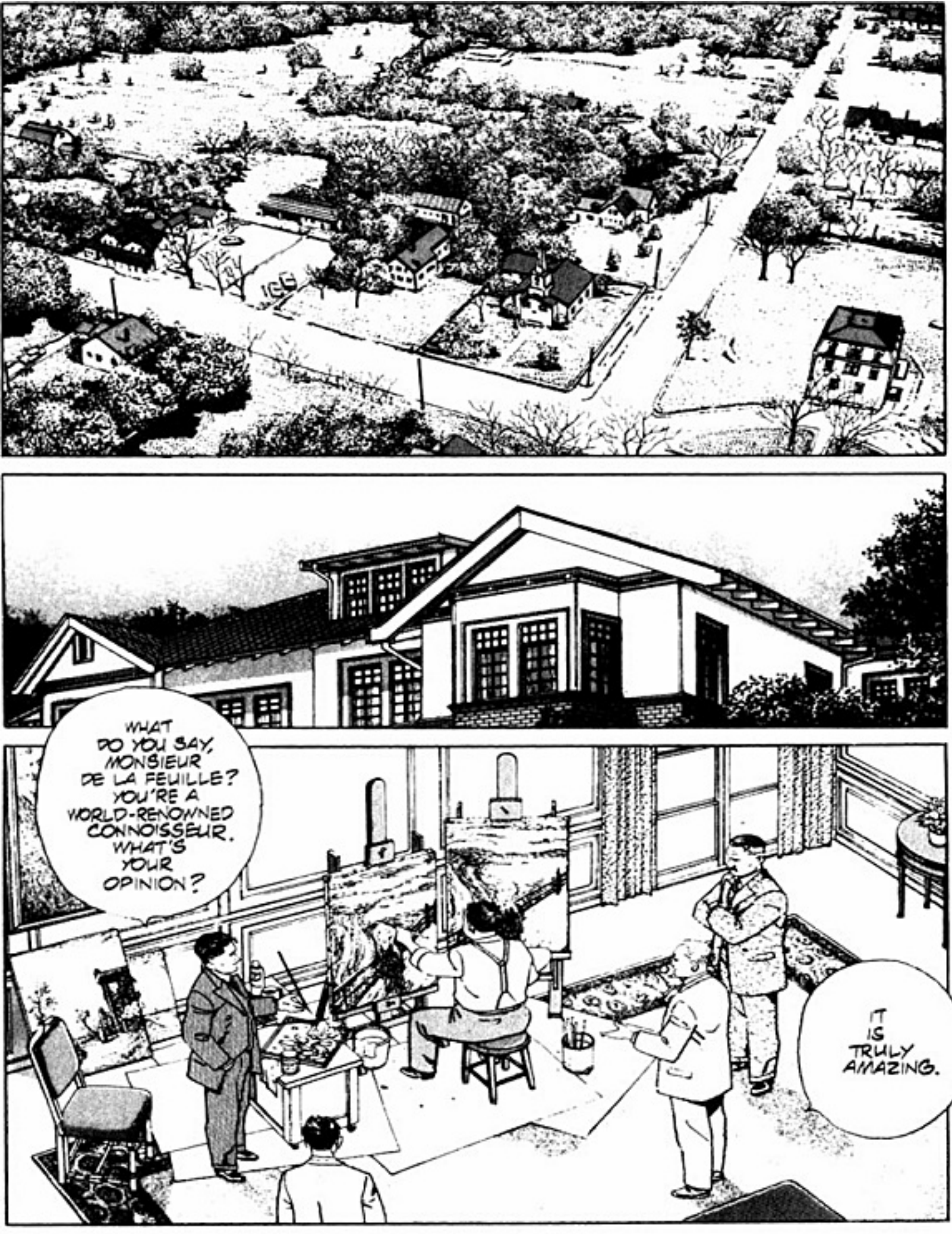
"WAR RUNS THROUGH MY BLOOD..."



"MY DAYS HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH BOREDOM..." "..."

"GOOD BYE."

Chapter 4: THE CRY

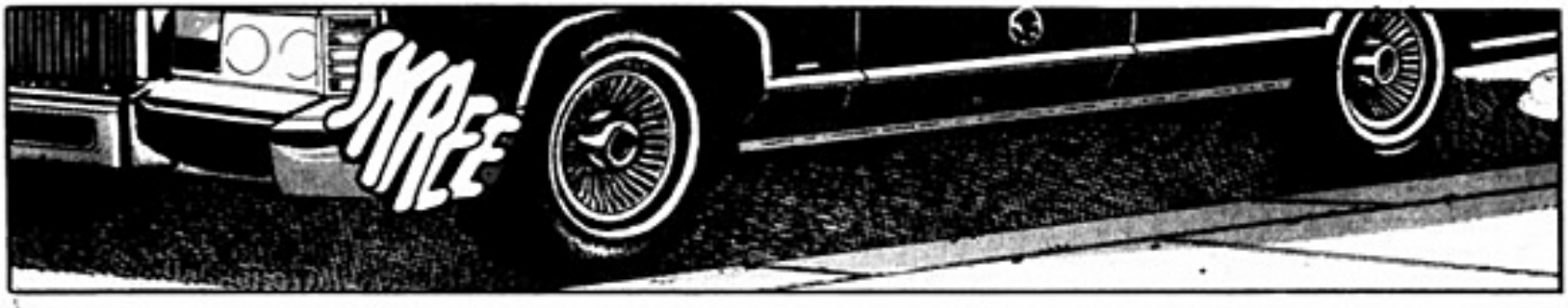

WHAT DO YOU SAY, MONSIEUR DE LA FEUILLE? YOU'RE A WORLD-RENOWNED CONNOISSEUR. WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?
IT IS TRULY AMAZING.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT MUNCH WROTE IN HIS DIARY AFTER HE PAINTED THE SCREAM?
AS THE SUN SET, THE CLOUDS BECAME SOAKED IN RED.
I FELT A SCREAM PIERCING NATURE.
I FELT I COULD HEAR THIS SCREAM.
I PAINTED THIS IMAGE.
I PAINTED THE CLOUDS AS IF THEY WERE MADE OF BLOOD.

511
THE COLORS SCREAMED.
AMAZING. THIS ASIAN HAS COMPLETELY RECREATED THE EMOTIONS OF THE ANGST-RIDDEN NORWEGIAN.
I KNEW ANTONIO WOULD BE THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB.
UH, YOU MIND CHATTING SOMEWHERE ELSE?
I'LL BE FINISHED WITH THIS PRETTY SOON. YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF MY FEE AFTER THAT.
AN-TONIO ...
WHERE'D YOU FIND THIS GUY?
NOW NOW, HE'S AN ARTIST.

YOU'RE PAINTING FOR ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MEN IN THE CHINESE MAFIA.
HE'S ONE OF YOUR KIND. YOU SHOULD WORK HARD FOR HIM.
WHERE DOES THE ORIGINAL GO AFTER THIS?
BACK TO THE SICILIANS.
TOO BAD... A MASTERPIECE... LOCKED UP BY THE MAFIA.
BENKEI, WE'RE IN A COMPLEX LINE OF WORK.
SOMETIMES, A LITTLE LUXURY KEEPS US STRAIGHT.
.....
MR. GANTINO ...
...LET'S HAVE A DRINK IN THE OTHER ROOM.

BENKEI ...
WHAT IS IT, MARIO?
YOU EITHER GOTTA BE FEARLESS ...
...OR A TOTAL DUMBFUCK.
WHY?
PUOO!
GANTINO HEADS OPERATIONS ON THE ENTIRE EAST COAST. HE MIGHT LOOK LIKE A SWELL GUY, BUT HE MURDERED HIS WAY TO THE TOP.
WELL, HE MIGHT SEEM INVINCIBLE TO YOU...
BUT...
...THAT'S JUST AN IMAGE.


SKREE

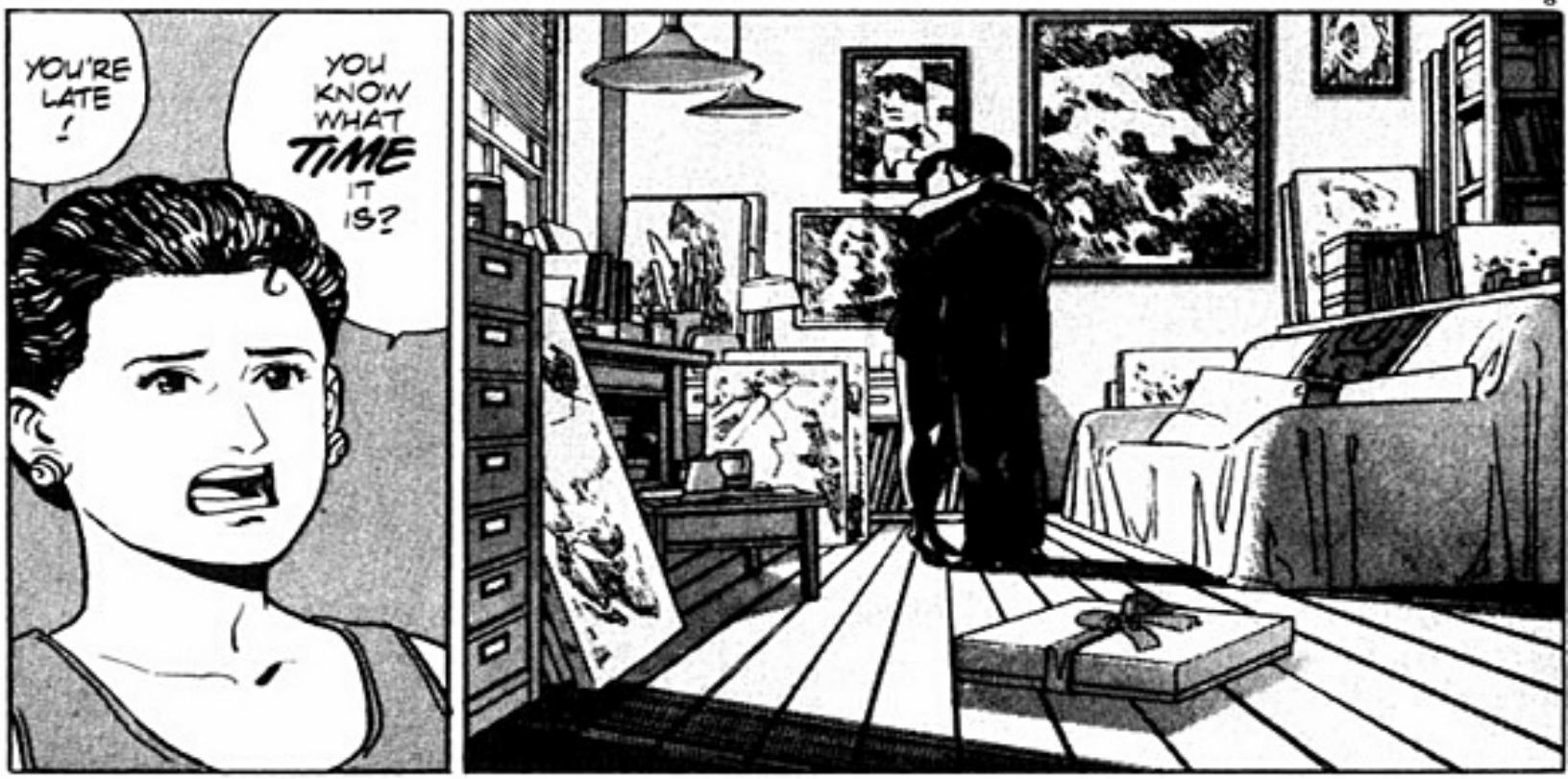
THANKS, BENKEI. I OWE YOU ONE.
HOPE THIS KEEPS YOU STRAIGHT, ANTONIO.
HUD

YOU TOO.

THUD
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MARIA.

FWAP

8


YOU'RE LATE!
YOU KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS?

SCREEECH!
KRESH
UR...
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

RING
WHAA...
RING
BEIKEI!
IT'S ME! ANTONIO!
I'VE BEEN SET UP...!

BUDDA
BUDDA
Phone

CHAK!
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
WHAT IS IT?
TUMP TUMP TUMP TUMP
BENKEI, IT'S ME, MARIO!
THEY WHACKED ANTONIO... WE WAS SET UP!
Urgh
Urgh
WHEN WE WENT TO DELIVER THE PAINTING...
...WE GOT JUMPED BY FIVE CHINESE GUYS. ANTONIO GAVE 'EM THE PAINTING.

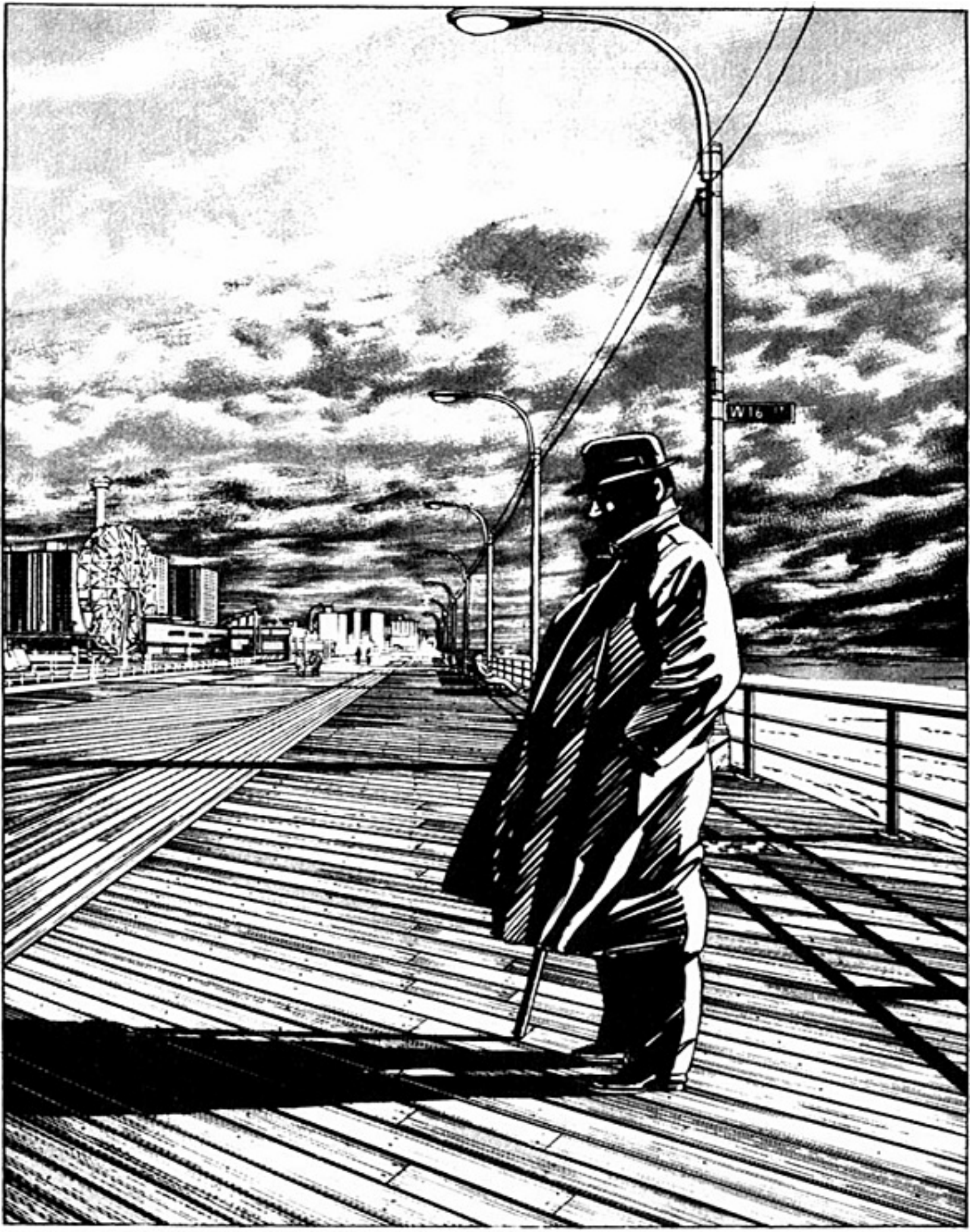
BUT GUESS WHO CHECKED IT FOR 'EM...
IT WAS THAT CREEP DE LA FEUILLE!
GANTINO'S UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS AGAIN.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HE'S BEEN TRYING TO EXPAND HIS OPERATIONS FOR A WHILE NOW.
BUT HE GOT TIRED OF WAITING, SO HE JUST DECLARED WAR ON THE OTHER FAMILY, SO HE'D JUST HAVE AN EXCUSE TO CRUSH 'EM!
ANTONIO WAS AGAINST GANTINO FROM THE BEGINNING!
SKREECH!

CHUD
EVER SINCE ANTONIO'S SISTER DIED FROM AN OVERDOSE, HE'S BEEN AGAINST DRUG-RUNNING.
BUT MY BOSS AND GANTINO JUST THOUGHT HE WAS IN THE WAY.
I DON'T GET IT.
WHY GO THROUGH ALL THESE SHENANIGANS JUST TO KILL ANTONIO?
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. ANTONIO'S WIFE IS THE DAUGHTER OF THE BOSS IN PALERMO. THEY COULDN'T TOUCH HIM.
.....
SO GANTINO COOKED UP THIS PLOT.
HE GOT HIS HANDS ON THE MUNCH FROM THE ORIGINAL THIEVES, AND THEN HIRED ANTONIO TO DELIVER A FORGERY.
Sip
THEN HE ARRANGED IT SO IT'D LOOK LIKE THE CHINESE MAFIA KILLED HIM FOR IT.

RATATATATATAT
MARIA, GET TO THE FIRE ESCAPE!!
SHOOM
FLIK
RATATATA
THAT

RATATATATATATAT
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
BENKEI! YOU ALL RIGHT?
HUF
HUF
YEAH, I'M FINE.

WE NEED TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE OUT FOR A WHILE.
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
THERE'S NO TIME FOR THAT.
WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
GANTINO'S GONNA WHACK YOU!
I NEED MY PAINT SUPPLIES!
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I'M GOING TO SET UP A MEETING WITH GANTINO.
YOU'RE OUTTA YOUR MIND.
YOU GOT A DEATH WISH?
HE'S FINALLY GOING TO GET A TASTE ...
...OF MUNCH'S BLOOD!


W16 ST

YOU'RE CALLING THE MAN WHO ORDERED YOU DEAD.
YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF GUTS.
IF YOU'D LAID LOW, I MIGHT HAVE CALLED OFF MY DOGS.
ACTUALLY, I WANTED TO HELP YOU OUT.
AFTER ALL, WHY OWN JUST A FORGERY?
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?
I PAINTED TWO FORGERIES.
INTERESTING. WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?
YOU KILLED ANTONIO TOO QUICKLY TO FIND OUT.

.....
THERE'S ALWAYS THE DANGER OF BEING KILLED IN THIS BUSINESS, SO...
...I LIKE TO HOLD ONTO THE ORIGINAL FOR A WHILE, AS INSURANCE.
AND YOU POSSESS THE ORIGINAL?
YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF. TOMORROW MORNING AT SIX O'CLOCK.
BRING YOUR PAINTING TO THE CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK.
YOU TAKE ME FOR AN IDIOT?
I DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE OR NOT. ONCE THEY FIND OUT THE PAINTING YOU HAVE IS A FORGERY, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO BE WHACKED NEXT.
I FIGURED YOU'D BE MY HIGHEST BIDDER.
.....
I GUESS I WAS WRONG. GOODBYE.
HOLD ON!

AMAZING...
HOW DO YOU PAINT WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE ORIGINAL?
MY HAND REMEMBERS.
I DON'T GET IT. YOU HAVE THIS AMAZING TALENT...
SO WHY DON'T I PAINT MY OWN WORK?
IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE THINKING?
IT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT FAME. IT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU, THOUGH.

NICE OF YOU TO COME.
ENOUGH WITH THE ATTITUDE.
I'M GONNA TEACH YOU A LESSON TODAY.

HAVE A LOOK, MR. CONNOISSEUR.
KRISK
.....
MR. GANTINO, MAY I SEE YOURS NOW?!
WHAT?!
WELL, DE LA FEUILLE?

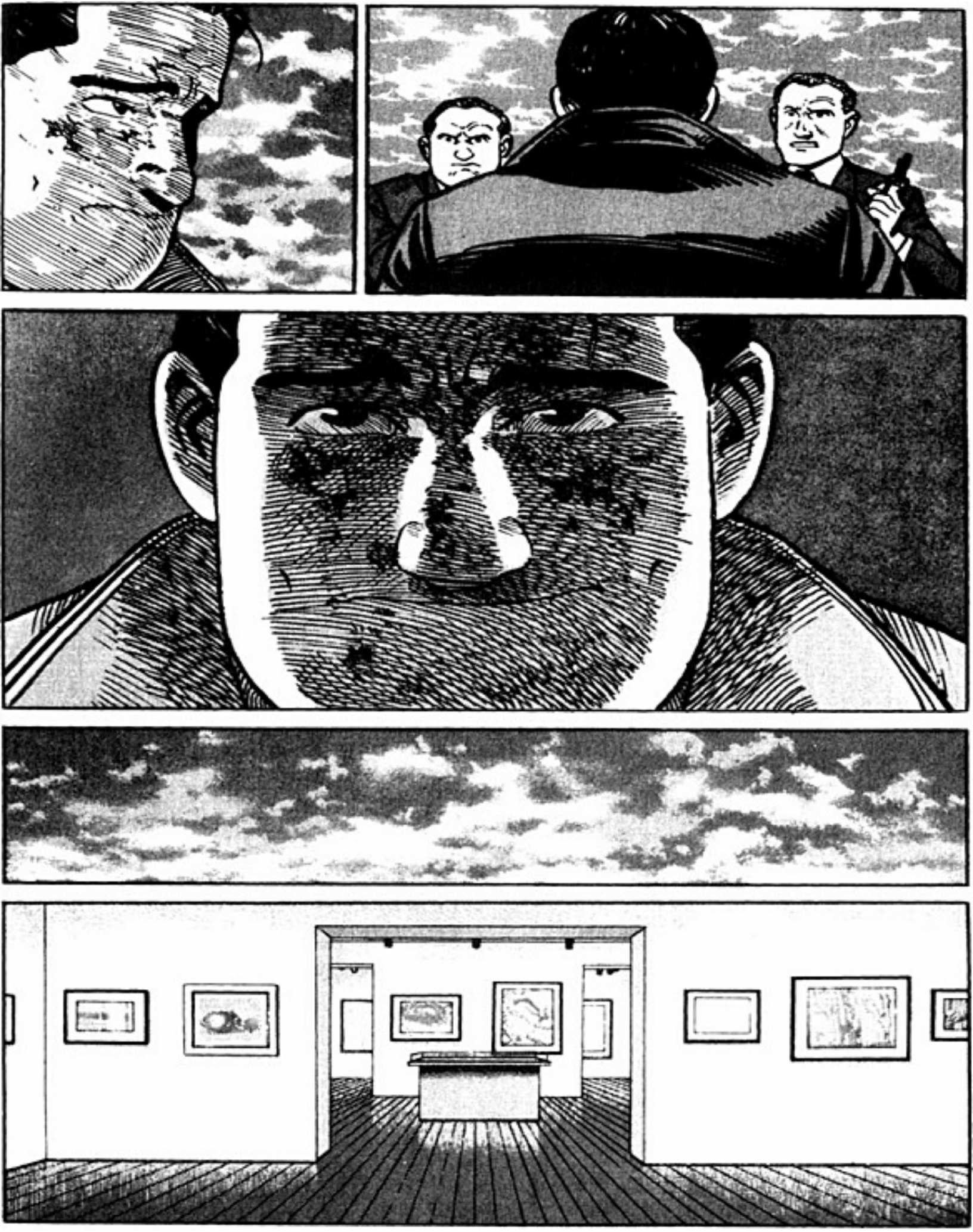
UNBELIEVABLE. TWO ORIGINALS.
THAT CAN'T BE.
ON THE BACK OF THE PAINTING IS A SKETCH MUNCH ABANDONED.
THERE ARE ALSO SIX STICKERS THERE.
.....
TURN IT AROUND.
FWIP
51
I DELIBERATELY LEFT OUT ONE OF THE NUMBERS ON THE FORGERY.
5! ...
FWIP

511
DE LA FEUILLE! WHICH ONE IS THE ORIGINAL?
.....
TH-THIS ONE IS...
WHAT?!
FINISH
GIVE ME THAT!
SO THIS IS...
...THE ORIGINAL!!

TAKE A CLOSE LOOK, GANTINO...
...AT MUNCH'S BLOOD-RED SKY!
FLIP

A-EEE!
ARR...
WHOOP

.....
51
RRIP
511
WH-WHY... THAT'S ...
YOUR EYES HAVE GONE BAD, DE LA FEUILLE.

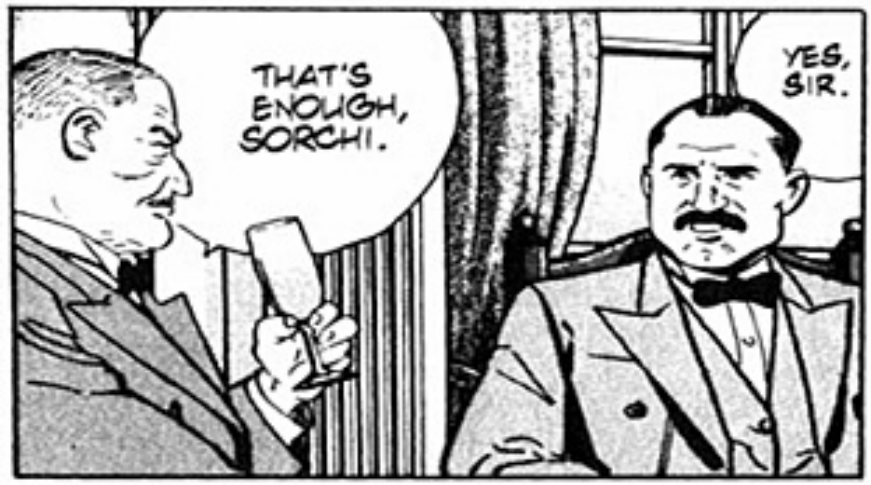


Chapter 5: SWORD FISH

WELCOME TO SICILY, BENKEI.
IT'S AN HONOR.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVITATION.
MR. TROIA WOULD LIKE TO HIRE YOU, BENKEI.
IT DEPENDS ON THE CONDITIONS.

WOW!

A SWORD-FISH...
...CAUGHT TODAY IN YOUR HONOR.
YOU BETTER EAT IT ALL, OR YOU'LL BE THE ONE ON THE TABLE. HA HA!


THAT'S ENOUGH, SORCHI.
YES, SIR.

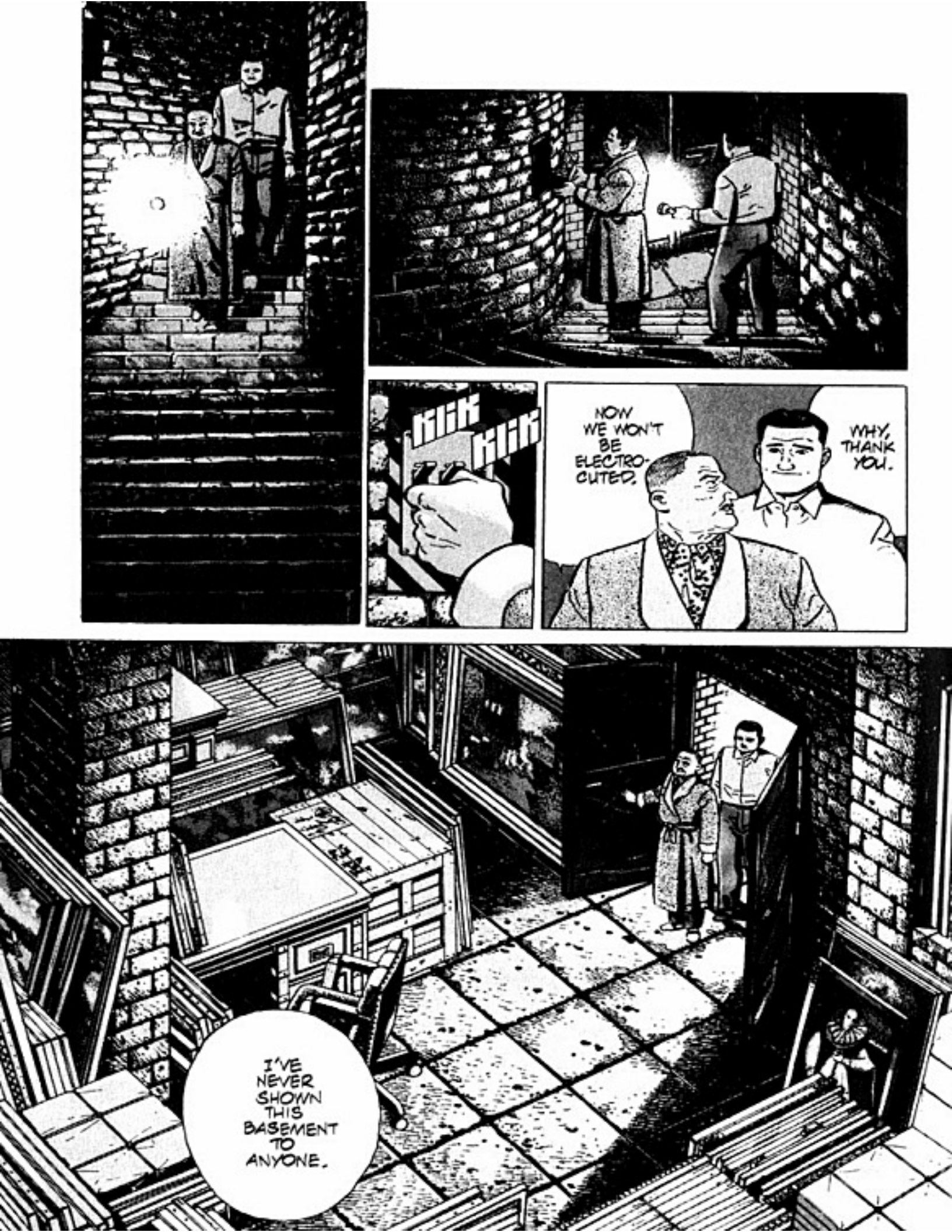
I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS MEAL!

SO BENKEI...
I UNDERSTAND YOU DON'T USE GUNS.
GUNS KILL AUTOMATICALLY, WITHOUT THINKING.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I DO.
BUT WHETHER YOU USE GUNS OR BOMBS, THE RESULTS ARE THE SAME. THE VICTIMS END UP IN HELL.
FOR ME, MEANS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ENDS.
I CONSIDER MY WORK A KIND OF... DIALOGUE.
WHEN YOU GO AGAINST YOUR OPPONENT, YOU HAVE TO FEEL THE PRESS OF HIS BLOOD, AND HIS PAIN.
.....
OTHERWISE, YOU'VE GAINED NOTHING.

...
HA HAHA HA
SO YOU CONSIDER KILLING AN ART, EH?
...
TO ME, ONE PULLS THE TRIGGER ...
...SIMPLY OUT OF FEAR.
HA! HA HAHA HA!

BZZZZZZ
BZZZZZZ
BZZZZZZ
BZZZZZZ
IS IT TRUE?
I HEAR TROIA'S INVITED BENKEI TO SICILY.
IT'S TRUE. THAT BENKEI'S A STRANGE ONE.
HE HAD THE HEAD OF THE SWORDFISH WE ATE FOR DINNER DISPLAYED IN HIS GARDEN.
WHAT'S TROIA UP TO?
BEATS ME.
HE'S GOT TOO MUCH TIME TO KILL THESE DAYS IF YOU ASK ME.

I THINK YOU SHOULD GET RID OF THIS BENKEI.
WHY?
I HEAR HE CAN JUST LOOK AT A PAINTING ...
...AND PAINT A PERFECT FORGERY IN A COUPLE OF DAYS.
REALLY?
AND HE CAN BITE LIKE A RABID DOG.
HE KILLED GANTINO, YOU KNOW.
AND THEN HE HAD THE NERVE TO DROP OFF THE PAINTING GANTINO STOLE AT A MUSEUM.
GANTINO'S BROTHER WANTED REVENGE. HE HIRED TWO KILLERS, BUT THEY NEVER RETURNED.
HE SOUNDS TOUGH.
CAN YOU GET GRECO OVER HERE?
10000 LIRE CINQ


KLIK KLIK
NOW WE WON'T BE ELECTRO-CUTED.
WHY, THANK YOU.
I'VE NEVER SHOWN THIS BASEMENT TO ANYONE.

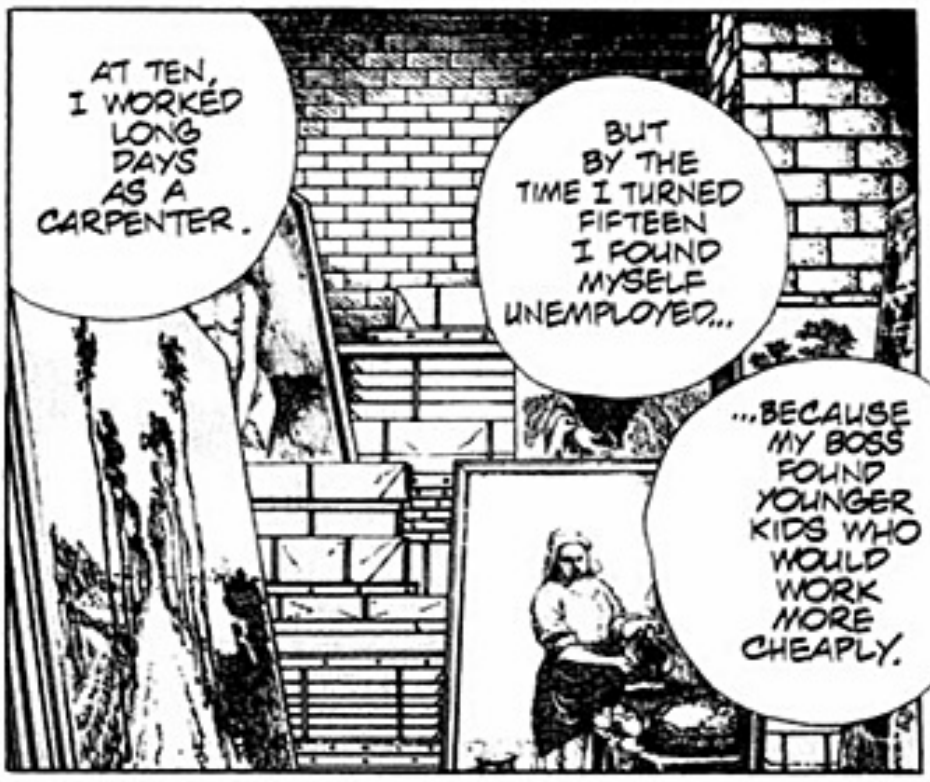
NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT THESE PAINTINGS.
I SHOW THEM TO YOU BECAUSE I TRUST YOU.

DO YOU KNOW HOW I GOT TO WHERE I AM TODAY?
I DON'T ASK ABOUT MY CLIENTS' LIVES.

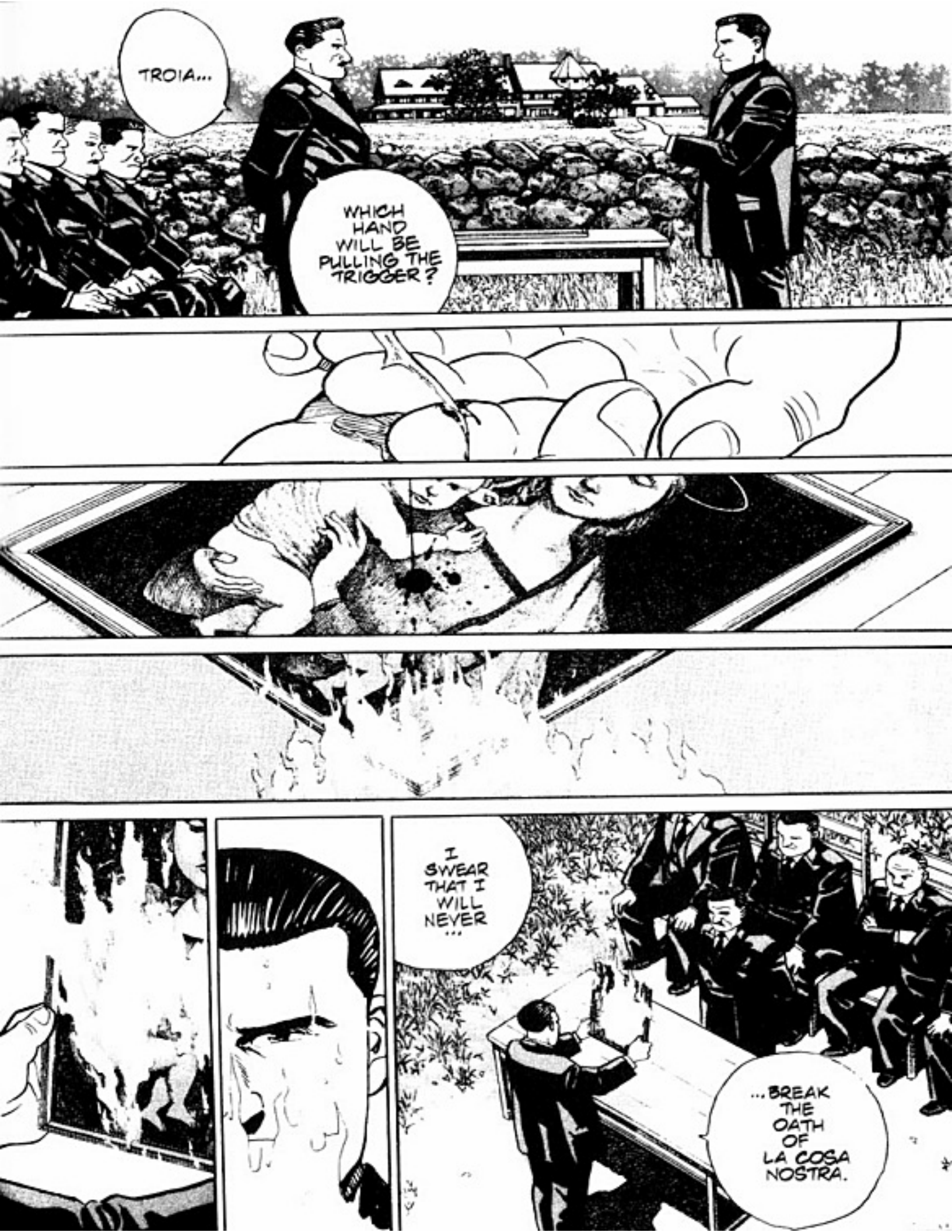
THAT SHOULD BE PART OF YOUR JOB.

.....
RIP
RIP
RIP

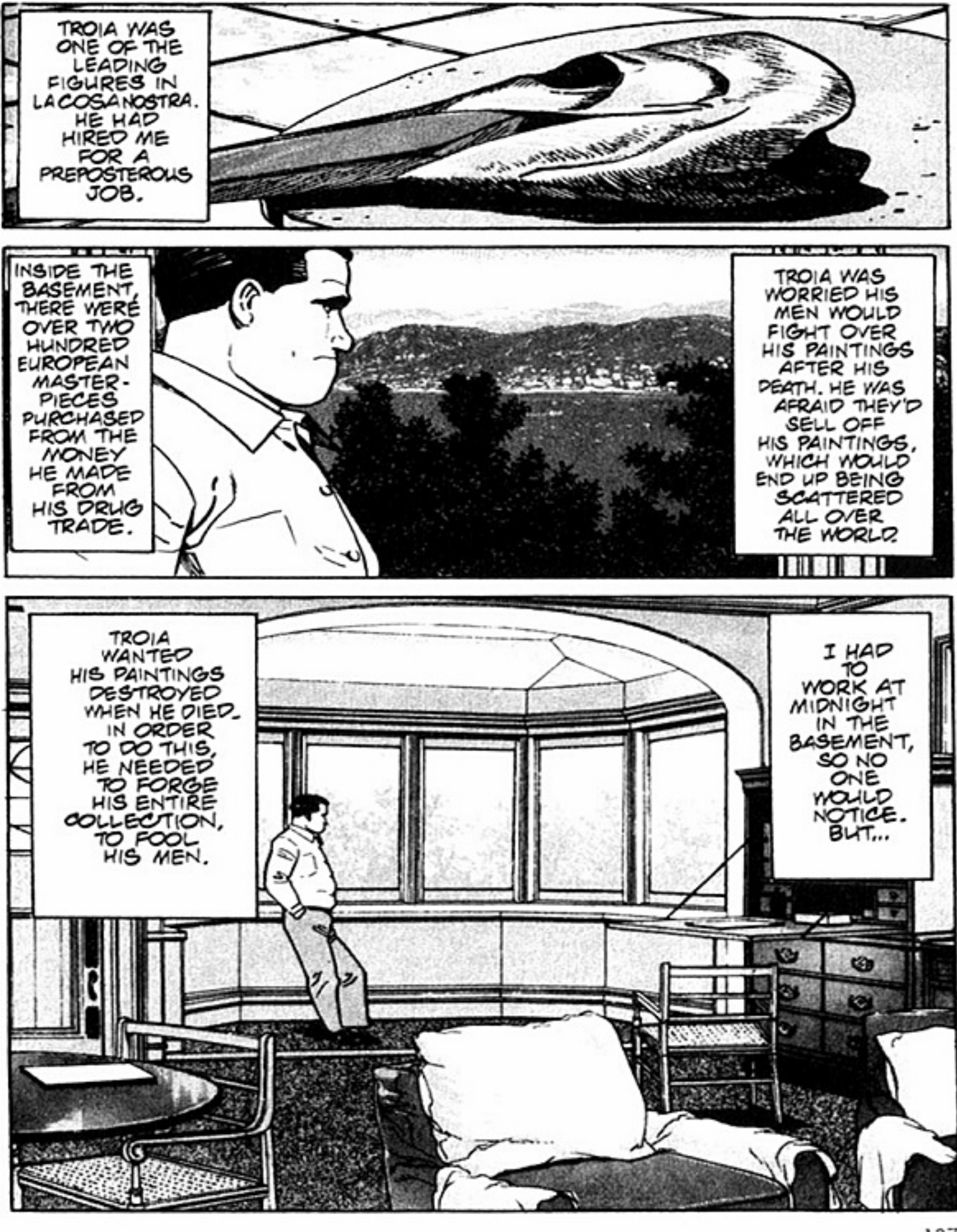
I WAS BORN IN THE GHETTO OF PALERMO.
I HAD TO RANSACK GARBAGE WITH MY FATHER EVER SINCE I WAS FIVE YEARS OLD.


AT TEN, I WORKED LONG DAYS AS A CARPENTER.
BUT BY THE TIME I TURNED FIFTEEN I FOUND MYSELF UNEMPLOYED...
...BECAUSE MY BOSS FOUND YOUNGER KIDS WHO WOULD WORK MORE CHEAPLY.

I DIDN'T WANT TO END UP LIKE MY FATHER ...
...A DRUNKARD.
...
I SMUGGLED MY WAY INTO THE U.S. ...
I WAS ILLITERATE.
ITALIAN, ENGLISH, IT DIDN'T MATTER.
WHERE I LIVED DIDN'T MATTER.
I WAS SO POOR, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WANTED.


TROIA...
WHICH HAND WILL BE PULLING THE TRIGGER?
I SWEAR THAT I WILL NEVER ...
...BREAK THE OATH OF LA COSA NOSTRA.

THOSE WHO LEARN HOW TO LIVE PROPERLY...
...NEVER CHOOSE TO ENTER OUR KIND OF LIFE.
YOU UNDER-STAND.
...
HUMAN BEINGS ARE FRAIL.
AFTER WE'VE HAD OUR FILL, WE CAN AFFORD A CONSCIENCE.
THEN WE SEE HOW FUTILE THINGS ARE.
NOTHING BUT THESE PAINTINGS CAN SAVE ME.


TROIA WAS ONE OF THE LEADING FIGURES IN LA COSA NOSTRA. HE HAD HIRED ME FOR A PREPOSTEROUS JOB.
INSIDE THE BASEMENT, THERE WERE OVER TWO HUNDRED EUROPEAN MASTER-PIECES PURCHASED FROM THE MONEY HE MADE FROM HIS DRUG TRADE.
TROIA WAS WORRIED HIS MEN WOULD FIGHT OVER HIS PAINTINGS AFTER HIS DEATH. HE WAS AFRAID THEY'D SELL OFF HIS PAINTINGS, WHICH WOULD END UP BEING SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WORLD.
TROIA WANTED HIS PAINTINGS DESTROYED WHEN HE DIED. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, HE NEEDED TO FORGE HIS ENTIRE COLLECTION, TO FOOL HIS MEN.
I HAD TO WORK AT MIDNIGHT IN THE BASEMENT, SO NO ONE WOULD NOTICE. BUT...

HEY, BENKEI.
WHEN CAN WE GO BACK TO NEW YORK?
I DON'T KNOW.
WHEN I'M DONE WITH MY WORK, I GUESS.
I'M REALLY BORED.
WE GOT TO GO OUT TODAY.
YEAH, BUT THAT GUY'S WITH US EVERYWHERE WE GO.
WELL, THIS IS MAFIA ISLAND.
THEY'RE JUST LOOKING AFTER US.

WHAT? WE'RE ALREADY GOING BACK?
YOU SHOULDN'T GO OUT AT NIGHT.
I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY.
THIS PLACE IS REALLY BORING.
NO TIFFANY'S, NO YANKEE STADIUM.
ENOUGH, MARIA.
DAMN!

BEEEP
BEEEEP
COME ON, SPEED UP!
VROOm
BEEEEP
!
FWOOSH

KRSH
KRSH
Huh!
THUG
CHAK
CHAK
CHUD

HAA!
BUDDA BUDDA
VIP
VIP
VIP
FUMP
ARGH!
TUG
KRAK
BUDDA BUDDA

CHUD!
UNBELIEVABLE !!
WHO'D DARE TO ATTACK ONE OF OUR GUESTS IN SICILY?
I BELIEVE GRECO'S MEN KIDNAPPED THE WOMAN.

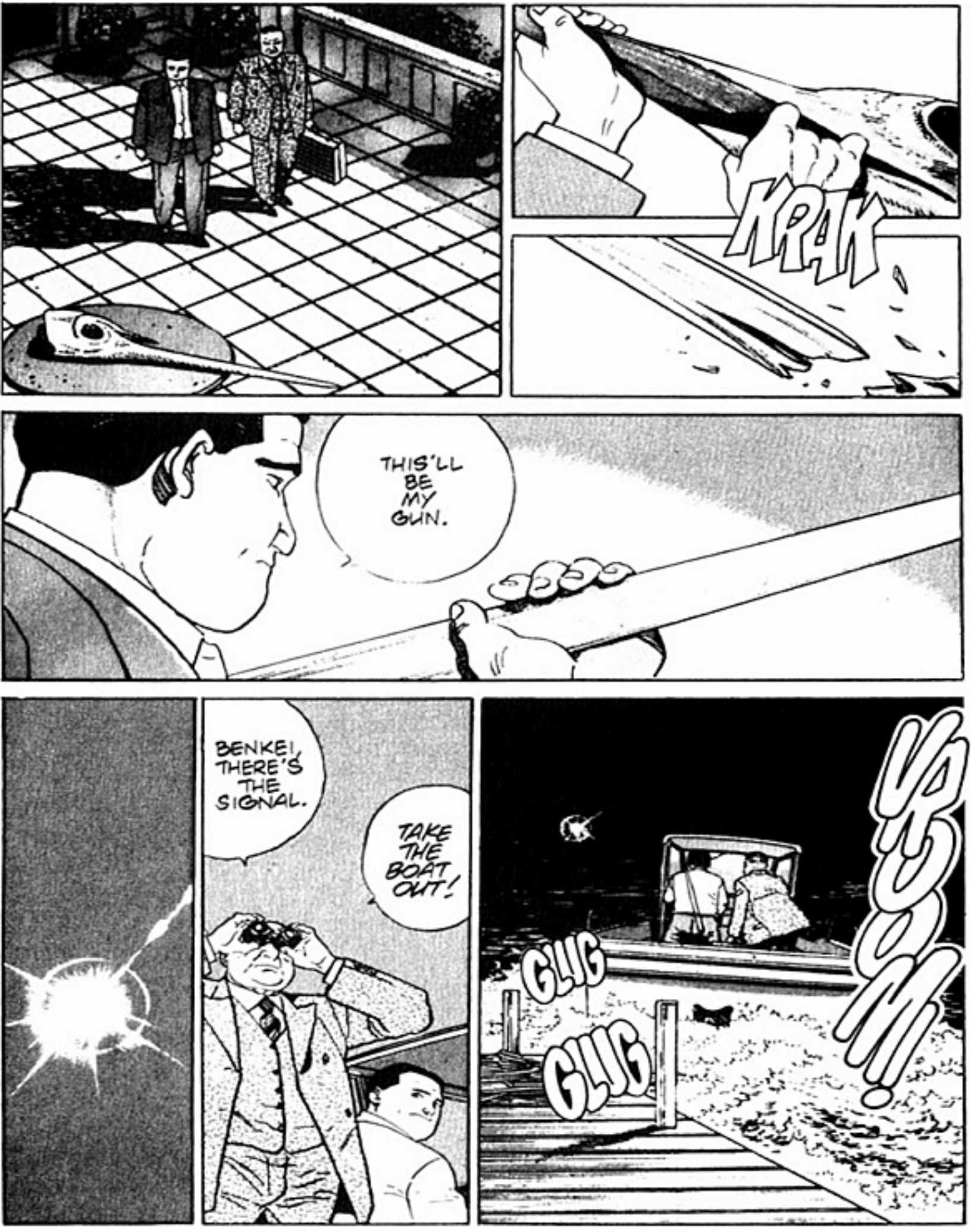
HE HAS A VENDETTA AGAINST BENKEI FOR THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER IN NEW YORK.
UNCLE TROIA, YOU WERE TOO CARELESS.
..
WE SHOULDN'T HAVE HIRED THIS MAN AND INVITED HIM TO SICILY.
I NEED HIM AROUND, SORCHI.
..
VERY WELL THEN, I'LL SET UP A MEETING WITH GRECO.
WHAT KIND OF CONDITIONS SHOULD WE AGREE TO?
I'LL PAY ANY AMOUNT HE ASKS FOR.
LET'S HOPE IT CAN BE RESOLVED THAT WAY.
I'LL MEET FACE TO FACE WITH GRECO...
...AND SEE IF WE CAN WORK THIS OUT.
.....
CHAK

CHUD
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY ABOUT THIS, BENKEI.
DON'T BE.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
WHAT I DON'T GET IS...
...IF IT WAS GRECO, WHY DIDN'T HE TRY TO KILL ME?
...
LET'S SEE WHAT SORCHI COMES UP WITH.
BY THE WAY, I NEVER ASKED.
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A FAMILY?
I DID, BUT MY WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED.
I'M SORRY.
MAY I ASK YOU ANOTHER QUESTION?
OF ALL THE PAINTINGS IN THE BASEMENT, WHICH ONE DO YOU LIKE BEST?

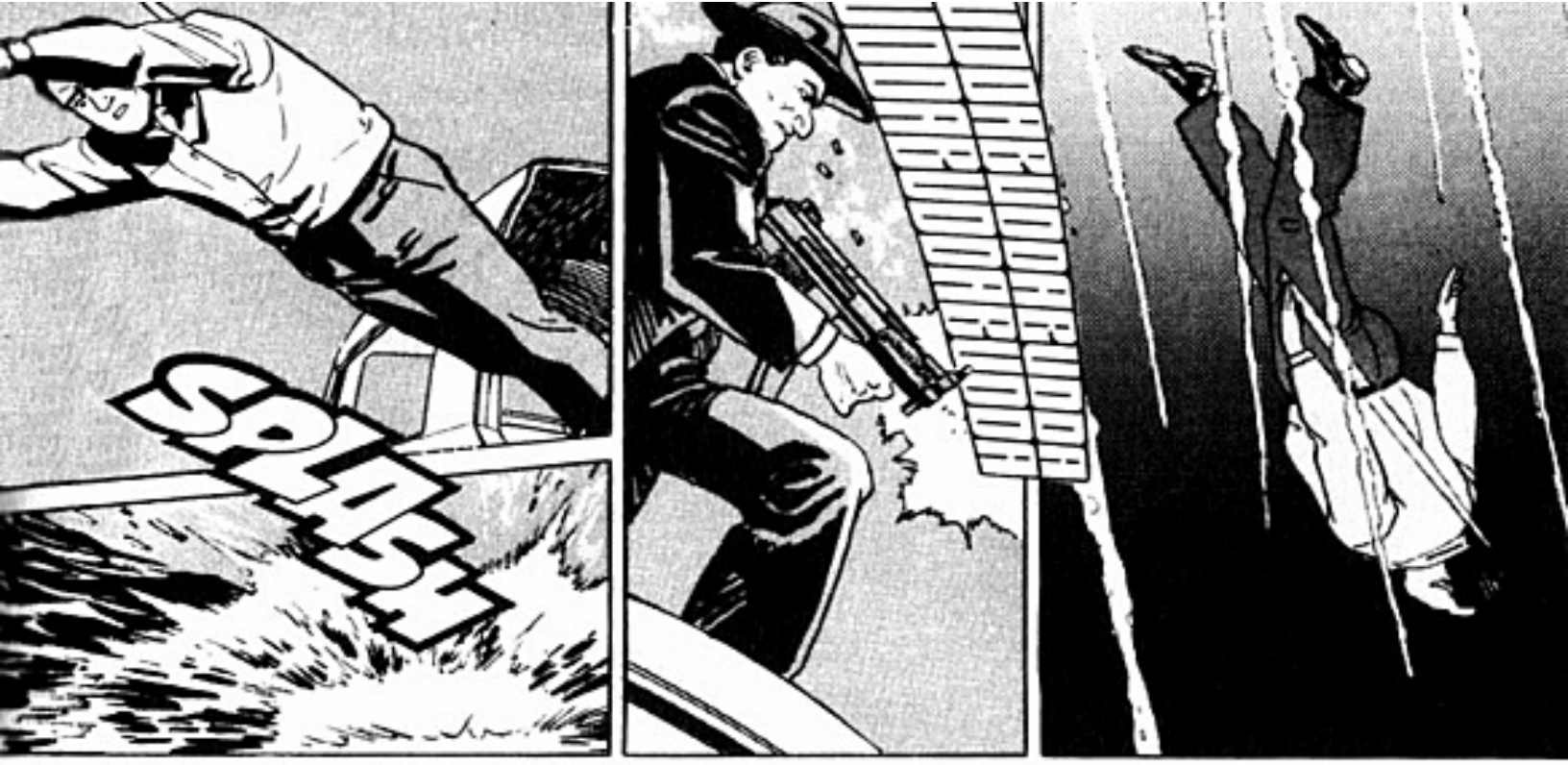
WHY DO YOU ASK?
JUST IN CASE I END UP LOSING AN ARM OR TWO FROM ALL THIS...
...I PROMISE YOU, I'LL FINISH THAT ONE PAINTING.
...
IT'S "MOTHER'S CARE" BY JEAN-FRANCOIS MILLET.
SO GRECO...
...I'VE DECIDED TO HELP YOU KILL BENKEI.
I SEE. WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

I NEED YOUR HELP TO KNOCK OFF TROIA.
BLAM!
HA HA HA!
THAT'S ASKING AN AWFUL LOT.
I CAN THROW IN MY UNCLE'S COCAINE CONNECTIONS.
...
GRECO WILL BE WAITING OUT AT SEA AT MIDNIGHT.
HE WANTS ONE BILLION LIRE TO BE BROUGHT TO HIM BY BENKEI AND YOU, UNCLE TROIA. NO ONE ELSE.
THEY'LL EXCHANGE THEIR HOSTAGE FOR THE MONEY ON THE BOAT.
THOSE ARE HIS TERMS.

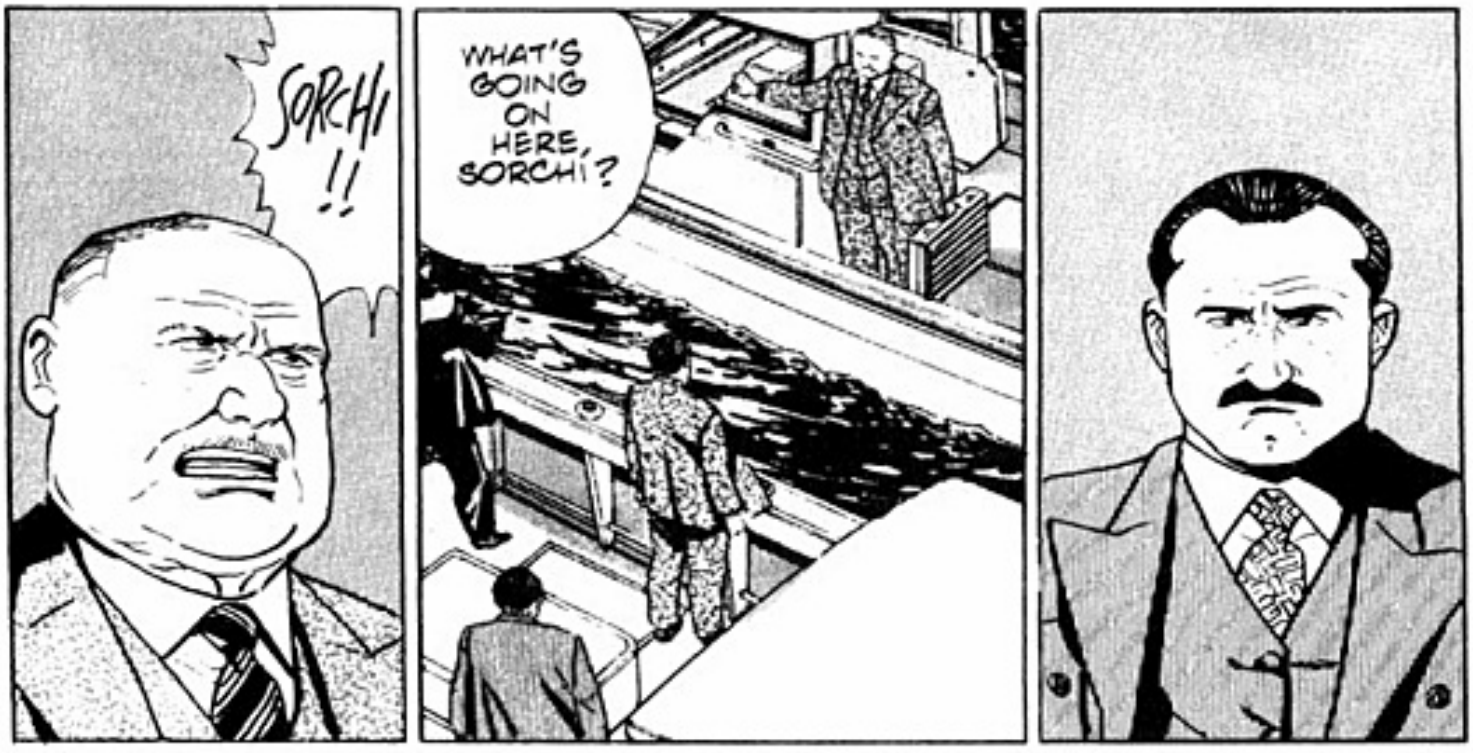
I'M GOING TO ACCOMPANY GRECO TO KEEP AN EYE ON MARIA.
THAT'S NICE OF YOU.
SO YOU'LL BE THEIR GUIDE.
THAT'S THE WAY HE WANTS IT.
DO YOU WANT TO SEE HER DEAD?
I SHOULD GET GOING.
I'LL GIVE THE LIGHT SIGNALS ONCE WE'RE OUT AT SEA.
...
CHUD
BENKEI ...
JUST IN CASE.
SORRY, NO GUNS FOR ME.


KRAK
THIS'LL BE MY GUN.
BENKEI, THERE'S THE SIGNAL.
TAKE THE BOAT OUT!
GLUG
GLUG
BOOM!

BENKEI!!
HERE, BENKEI.
I'M GIVING HER BACK TO YOU AS PROMISED.
AIEE!
SPOOSH
FWOOSH


SPLASH!
BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA

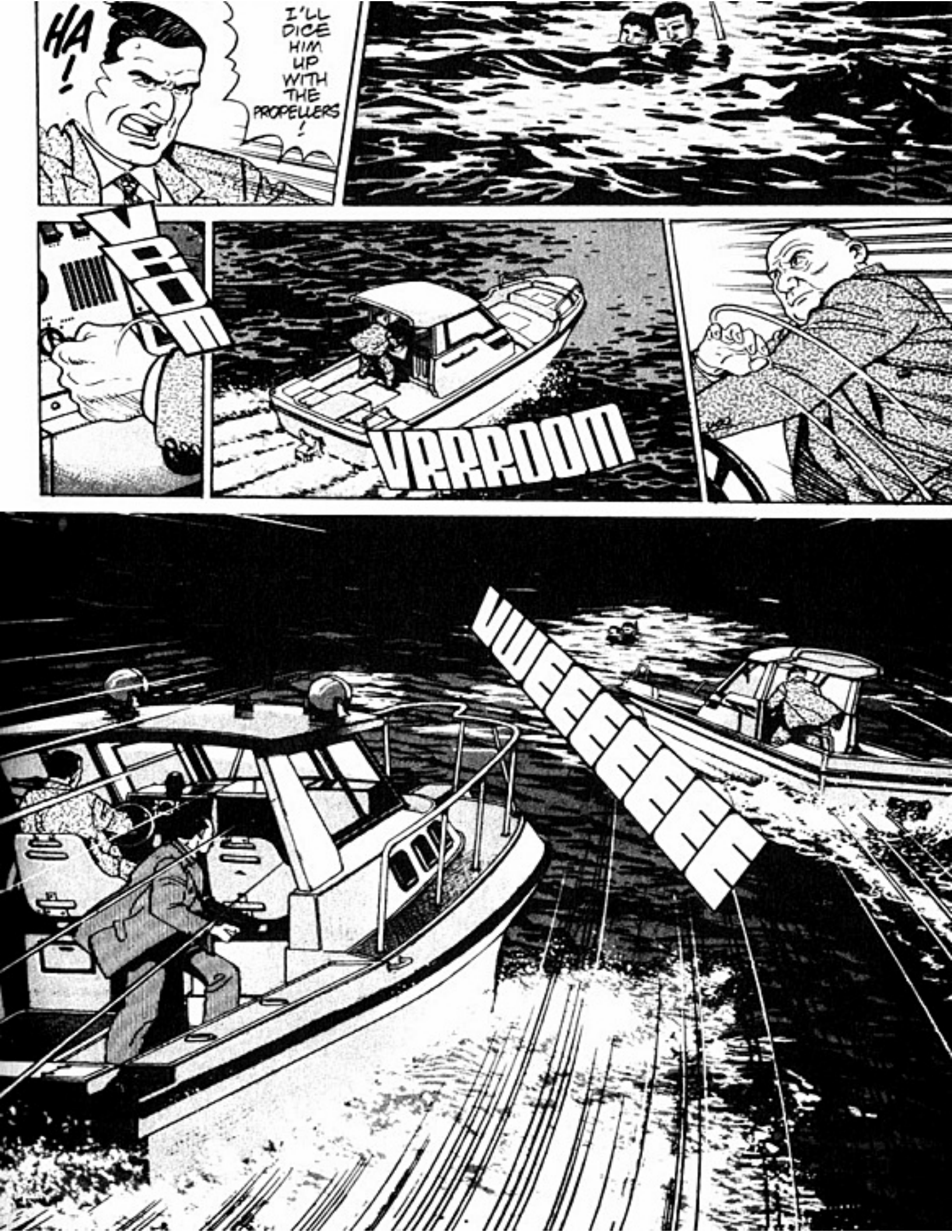
GRECO, YOU'RE GOING AGAINST YOUR WORD!
THIS ISN'T SICILY!
WE'RE AT SEA!


SORCHI!!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, SORCHI?

I SEE ...
I HAD A HUNCH IT WAS YOU.
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE OVER THE HILL...
...I NEVER ONCE DOUBLE-CROSSED YOU.
THAT'S WHY I INTENDED ON LEAVING MY ESTATE TO YOU.
BUT I WANT EVERY-THING!
YOUR MOST PRIZED POSSESSIONS!
...
THE PAINTINGS IN THE BASEMENT!
I CAN'T ...
...GIVE YOU THAT.
AS YOU WISH, THEN.
YOU WILL DIE.

SWOOSH
THUMP!
SPLASH!
TOTO!
GLUP
FOOM
SHWP

IT'S HIM!
VRRRRM
FSH
WEEEEEEEEEE
HE'S UNDER THE BOAT!


HA!
I'LL DICE HIM UP WITH THE PROPELLERS!
VROM
VRRROOM
WEEEEEE

WHOA!
HEY!
CATCH THEM!
WEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
VIP
VIP
VIP
ARGH
VWEEEE

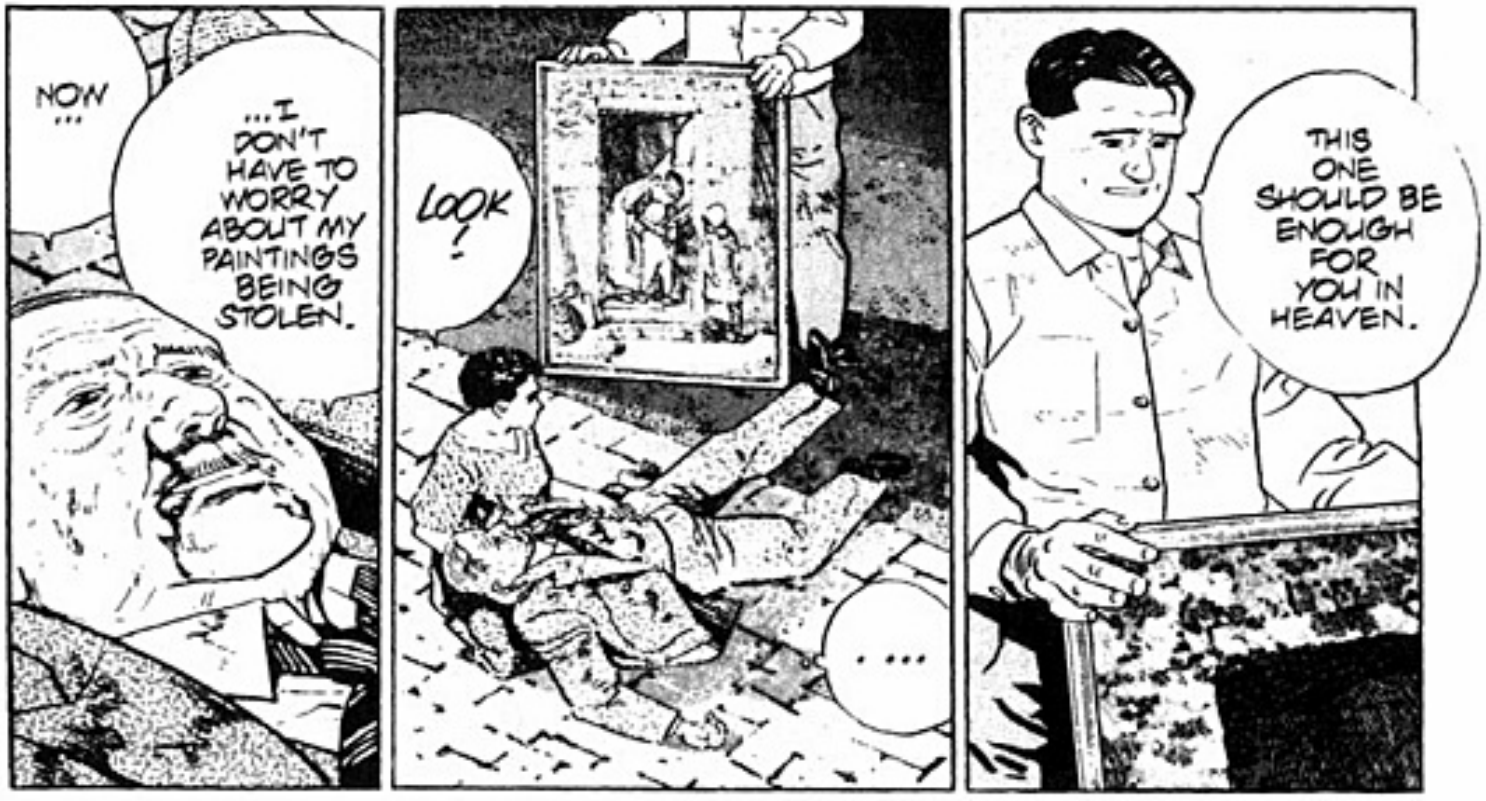
VROOM
WHERE'S BENKEI ?
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH

?!
ARGH !!
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
FENG
GRECO !
FSHA
BENKEI !
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA

UP
FSH
NOW YOU SEE...
...HOW GUNS ARE STRONGER THAN MEN.
GET UP.
LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT THE OLD MAN'S PAINTINGS.
KLAK
Ur...
Urgh...

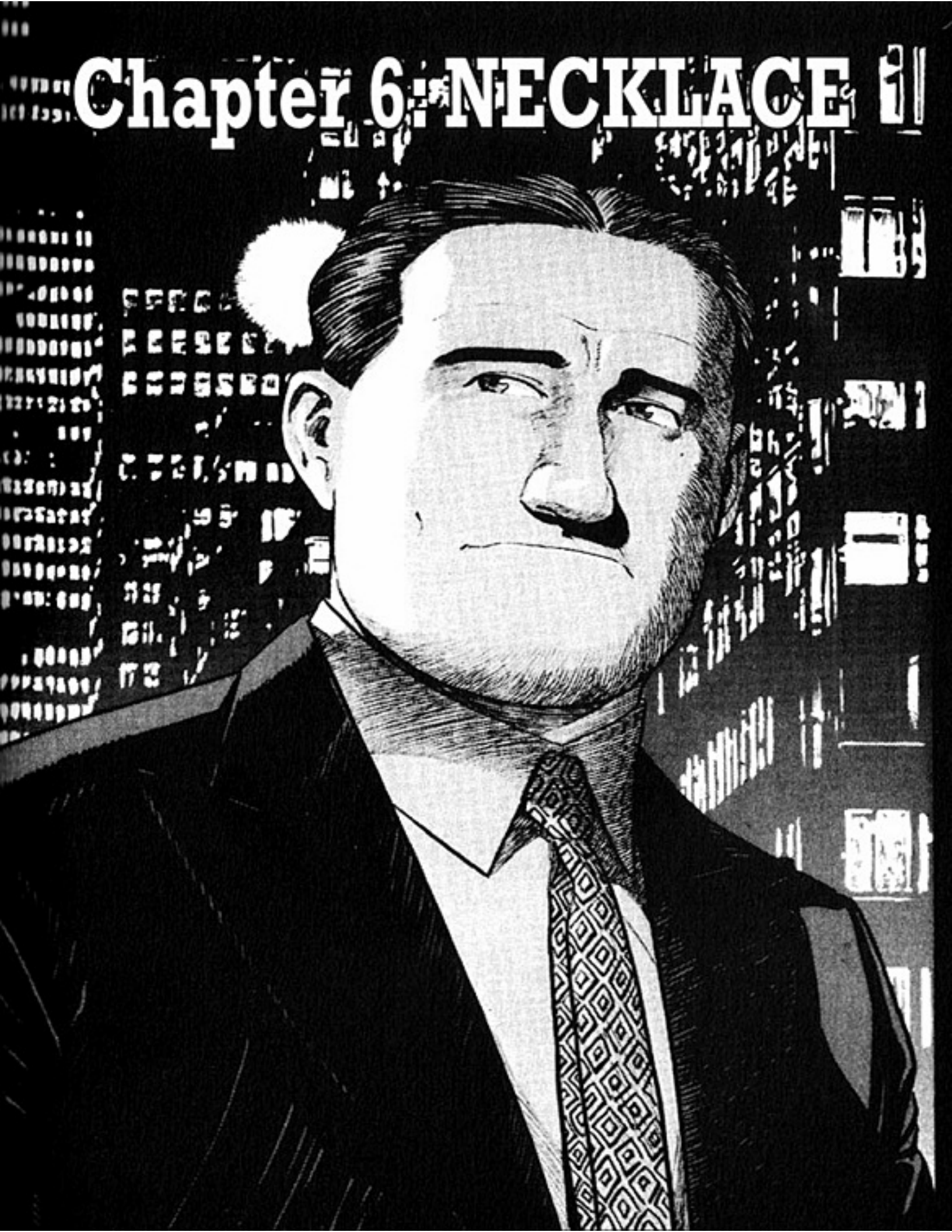
INCREDIBLE!
WHAT'S ALL THIS WORTH?
THERE AREN'T ENOUGH DIGITS IN LIRA CURRENCY TO COUNT.
HA HA HA!
HA HA HA!
IT'S ALL MINE NOW!

IT'S NOT!
FWOOSH
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
ROK ROK
FOOSH
AIEEE!


NOW ...
...I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MY PAINTINGS BEING STOLEN.
LOOK!
. ....
THIS ONE SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR YOU IN HEAVEN.

YES...
I GREW UP IN HORRIBLE CONDITIONS ...
...BUT I HAD A WONDERFUL MOTHER ...
DO YOU BELIEVE ME?

Chapter 6: NECKLACE



"YOU TELLING ME THAT'S HIP?
"IT AIN'T FOR ME.
"IT REMINDS ME TOO MUCH OF THE WETLANDS.
"THE JUNGLE-BOOTS NIGHT-MARE."
TAP
TAP
TAP
TAP

TAP
TAP
RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
IF YOU THI
TO KNOW A LO
JUST WAIT TILL
FWIK
=PHOO=
HEY BRO, I GOT A JOB FOR YOU.

CHUD

YOU SEE HER?
YES.
NAME'S SOPHIE GIBSON.
SHE USED TO BE A HOOKER. NOW SHE RUNS HER OWN RING.
SHE IS BEAUTIFUL.
TEN YEARS AGO...
...SHE HAD A GOOD REPUTATION FOR LOOKING AFTER HER GIRLS.

THEN, A FEW YEARS LATER, A LOT OF THEM STARTED TURNING UP AS HARD-CASE JUNKIES.
SHE'D GOTTEN THEM ALL HOOKED.
SHE GOT THEM TO SELL IT TO THEIR CUSTOMERS, TOO, WHILE SHE RAKED IN THE CASH, STAYING COMPLETELY CLEAN.
A HARSH BUSINESS-WOMAN.
THAT WAS JUST A START. SHE SLEPT WITH HER BOSS, KILLED HIM THERE, AND THEN TOOK OVER HIS TURF.
AND SO ON. TILL SHE MADE IT TO THE TOP.
THAT'S HER STYLE.

WHY DO YOU WANT HER DEAD?

SIX MONTHS AGO, THERE WAS A COCAINE-WAR SHOOTOUT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.
I REMEMBER.
IN NEW JERSEY.

THE CHILD WHO WAS ACCIDENTALLY SHOT... WAS MINE.

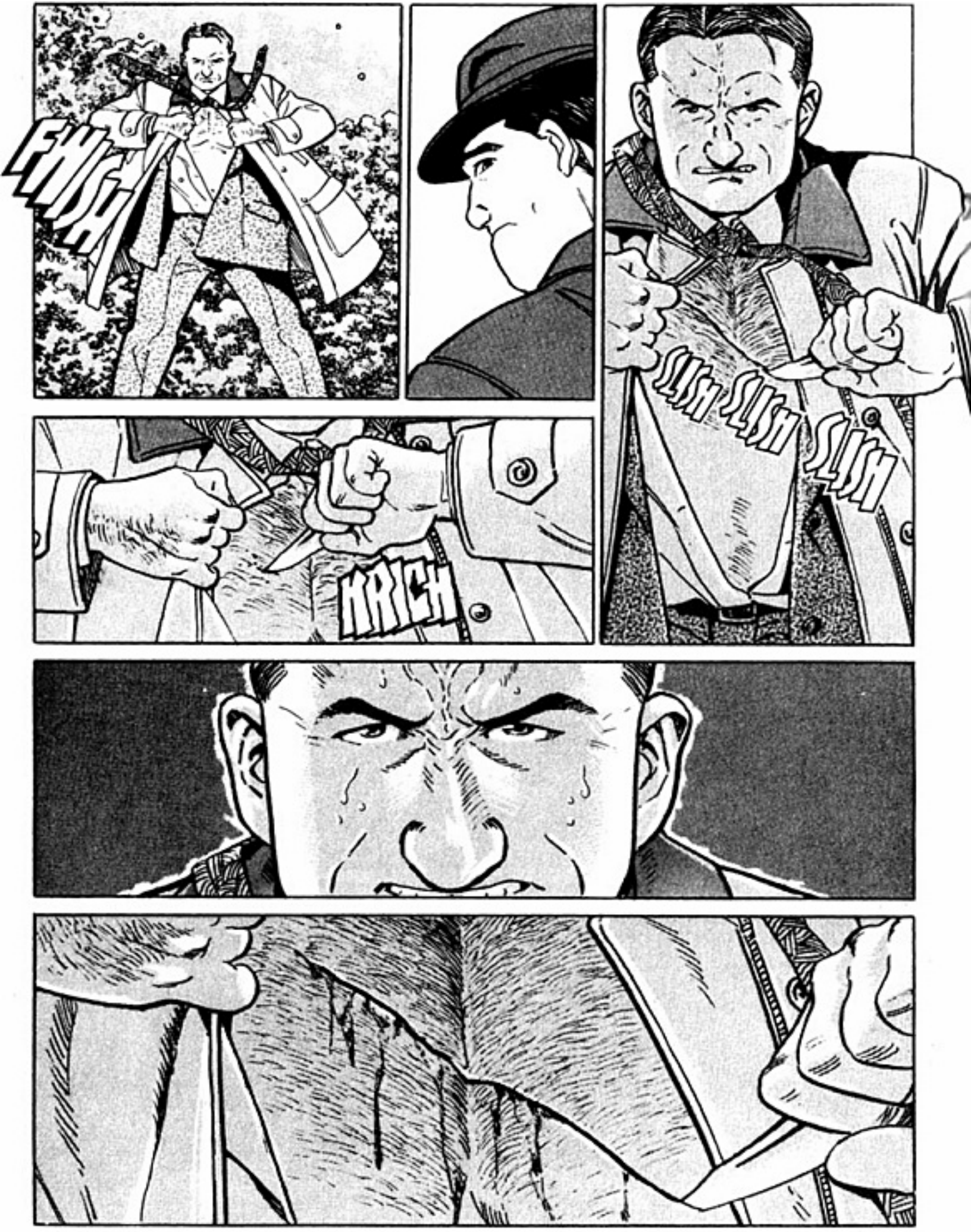
...

I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T DO THIS JOB.
WHY?

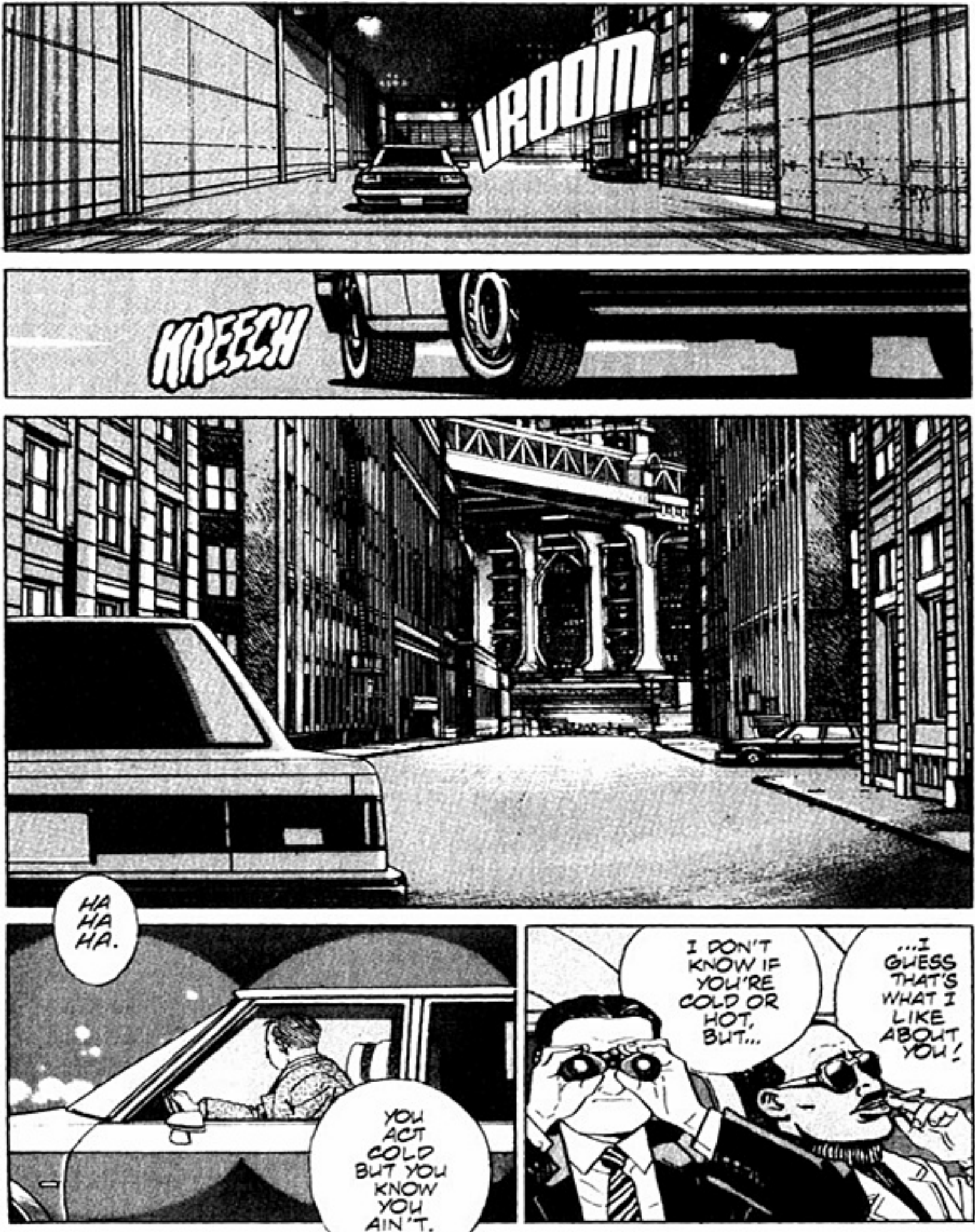
I CAN'T PROVE IF SHE WAS RESPONSIBLE OR NOT.
BUT I SAW HER DO IT!

LET THE POLICE HANDLE THIS.
THEY CAN'T BE BOTHERED.
THEY'RE TOO BUSY COVERING THEIR OWN ASSES.
HERE'S A CHECK FOR TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS.
USE THAT MONEY TO RAISE ANOTHER KID.
...
I'M NOT A VIGILANTE.
KLARETA
I SEE.
SO YOU TURNED DOWN THE JOB?
YES.
I FOLLOWED HIM AROUND LATER. HE SAID HE WAS FROM JERSEY BUT HE HAD VERMONT PLATES.

HE WAS LYING.
I HAVE TO GET BACK TO MY PAINTING.
I DON'T THINK...
...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FOR A WHILE.
...
HE WON'T GIVE UP. HE WANTS HER DEAD.
I COULD SMELL THE MURDER ON HIM.
I KNOW.
BETTE MIDLER
VIET NAM 69-70 QUANG TRI
I'M SORRY, BUT...
...I'M NOT CONVINCED.
WAIT!


FWISH
SLSH SLSH SLSH
KRICH

CHAK
IT WAS THE SILENCE OF MISERY.
WE'RE ALL SLAVES TO SOMETHING.
FWIK
...
Phoo.
AFTER I LOST MY EYES IN NAM, I FINALLY SAW THE WAY THE WORLD REALLY WORKS.
A HORSE WITH ITS ASS ON FIRE IS GOING TO KICK UP A SHITSTORM.
...
RIP
VIETNAM
69-70
QUANG TRI
IT'S GOING DOWN TONIGHT BY THE EAST RIVER.


VROOM
KREECH
HA HA HA.
YOU ACT COLD BUT YOU KNOW YOU AIN'T.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'RE COLD OR HOT, BUT...
...I GUESS THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU!

SHE'S HERE.
HEY...
...YOU GOTTA HAVE A TASTE FOR LIFE.
THE BONES OF OUR PAST ...
...CARRY VIOLENCE.
BITTER OLD BONES AND BLOOD.
BLOOD IS BLOOD WHEN IT POURS OUT.
YOU CAN'T DENY YOUR EMOTIONS.
WHOA!
WHAT'S HE DOING HERE?

THAT'S HIM, OUTSIDE HIS CAR.
WHAT'S HE UP TO?
IT'S OBVIOUS.
HE'S GOING TO SHOOT AT A MAFIA BOSS WITH A HUNDRED DOLLAR PISTOL.
IDIOT!
COUNTRY BOY.
TCH!
FWNG

SKREE
SOPHIE!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

SKHEE
PWING PWING
SKHEE
BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM

I COULD TAKE YOU TO A DOCTOR I KNOW, BUT...
KOFF
...IT'S A LITTLE TOO LATE.
FORGET ABOUT IT.

I'M... SATISFIED.

WHY DID YOU DO THAT?

...IN LOVE.

KOFF
SOPHIE AND I WERE...

WE GREW UP TOGETHER, IN A SMALL TOWN IN VERMONT. IT SEEMS LIKE SUCH A LONG TIME AGO.
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GET MARRIED.
KOFF
ONE WINTER FIFTEEN YEARS AGO...
...SOPHIE MET THIS FELLOW FROM NEW YORK WHO WAS ON VACATION SKIING.
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH
KRICH

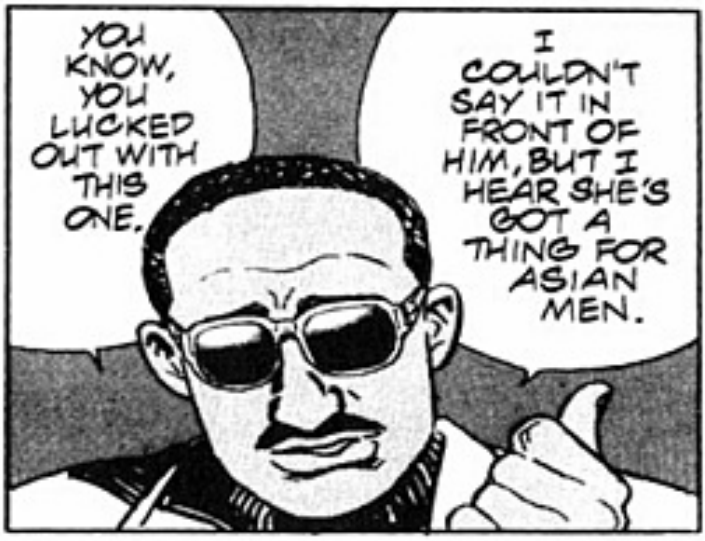
DING DONG
MERRY CHRIST-MAS!
SHE BETRAYED ME.
BY THE TIME HER PARENTS FOUND HER LETTER, SHE WAS ALREADY GONE.

SO YOU'RE GETTING BACK AT HER AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?
KOFF
N-NO...
LATELY ...
...A LOT OF GIRLS HAVE BEEN LEAVING OUR TOWN FOR NEW YORK. BUT THEY NEVER COME BACK.
THEY TURN UP AS HOOKERS, JUNKIES, OR DEAD.
THEY'D ALL FALLEN IN LOVE WITH SOPHIE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE ENDED UP LIKE THIS.
BUT I COULDN'T LET HER DO THIS ANYMORE.
WHY DID YOU LIE TO ME?
I WAS ASHAMED.
LIFE IN VERMONT ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY.
KOFF

TAKE IT EASY, MAN.
KOFF
SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER ME.
...I STILL LOVE HER.
PLEASE...
HER EYES WERE FILLED WITH HATRED, GLARING AT ME AS IF I WERE SOME STRAY DOG.
KOFF
BUT...
...GIVE THIS TO HER.
...
SH-SHE REALLY...
...USED TO BE...
KOFF
...RATHER KIND.
...

WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO NOW?
BENKEI?

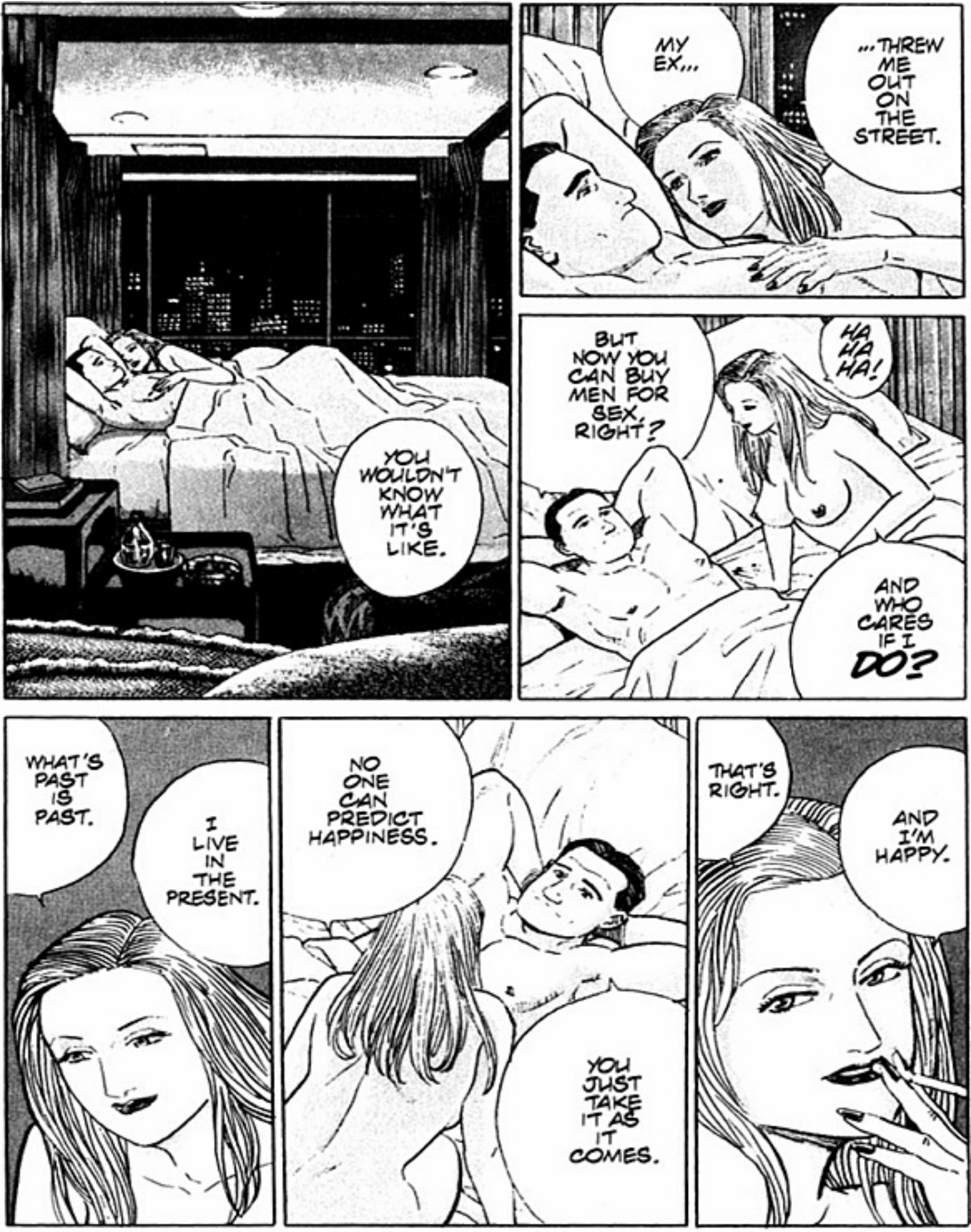
I'M GOING TO GIVE HER THE NECK-LACE.
HA HA!
OF COURSE.


YOU KNOW, YOU LUCKED OUT WITH THIS ONE.
I COULDN'T SAY IT IN FRONT OF HIM, BUT I HEAR SHE'S GOT A THING FOR ASIAN MEN.

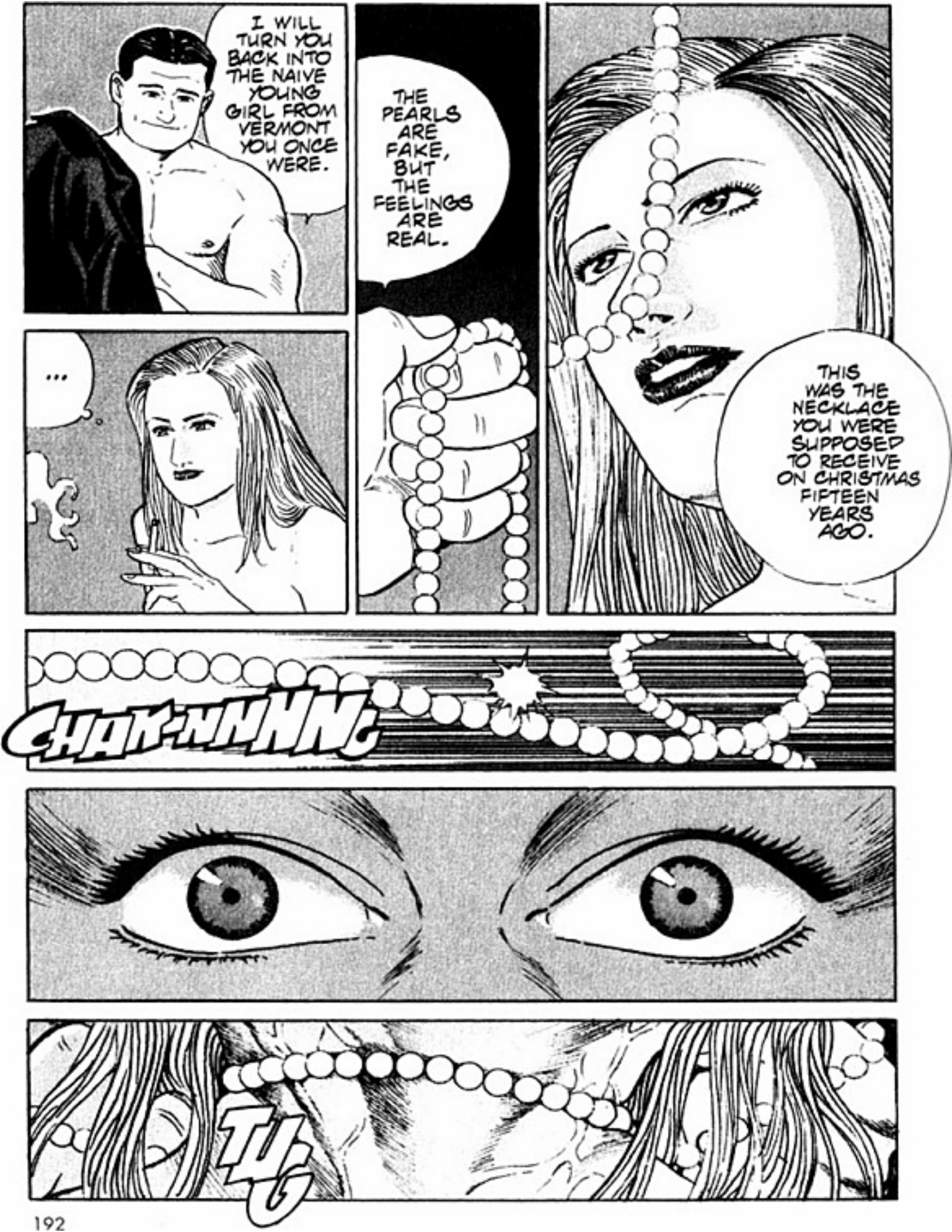
HEY...
WHAT ARE YOU MAKING?
WOW!
IS THAT FOR ME?
NO, FOR SOMEBODY ELSE.
AH, MAN!
THIS WOULDN'T SUIT YOU. IT'S STRINGED WITH PIANO WIRE.
TO STRANGLE SOMEBODY WITH LOVE.
OH. UH, WHY?

CHEERS!
YOU'RE A COOL ONE.
MOST MEN PEE IN THEIR PANTS WHEN THEY SEE MY PLACE.

WHY?
BECAUSE YOU'RE SO RICH?
OR BECAUSE OF THOSE GUYS OUTSIDE THE DOOR?
HEY!
GIMME A BREAK!
I LIKE...
...ASIAN MEN...
...WHO AREN'T SLAVES.

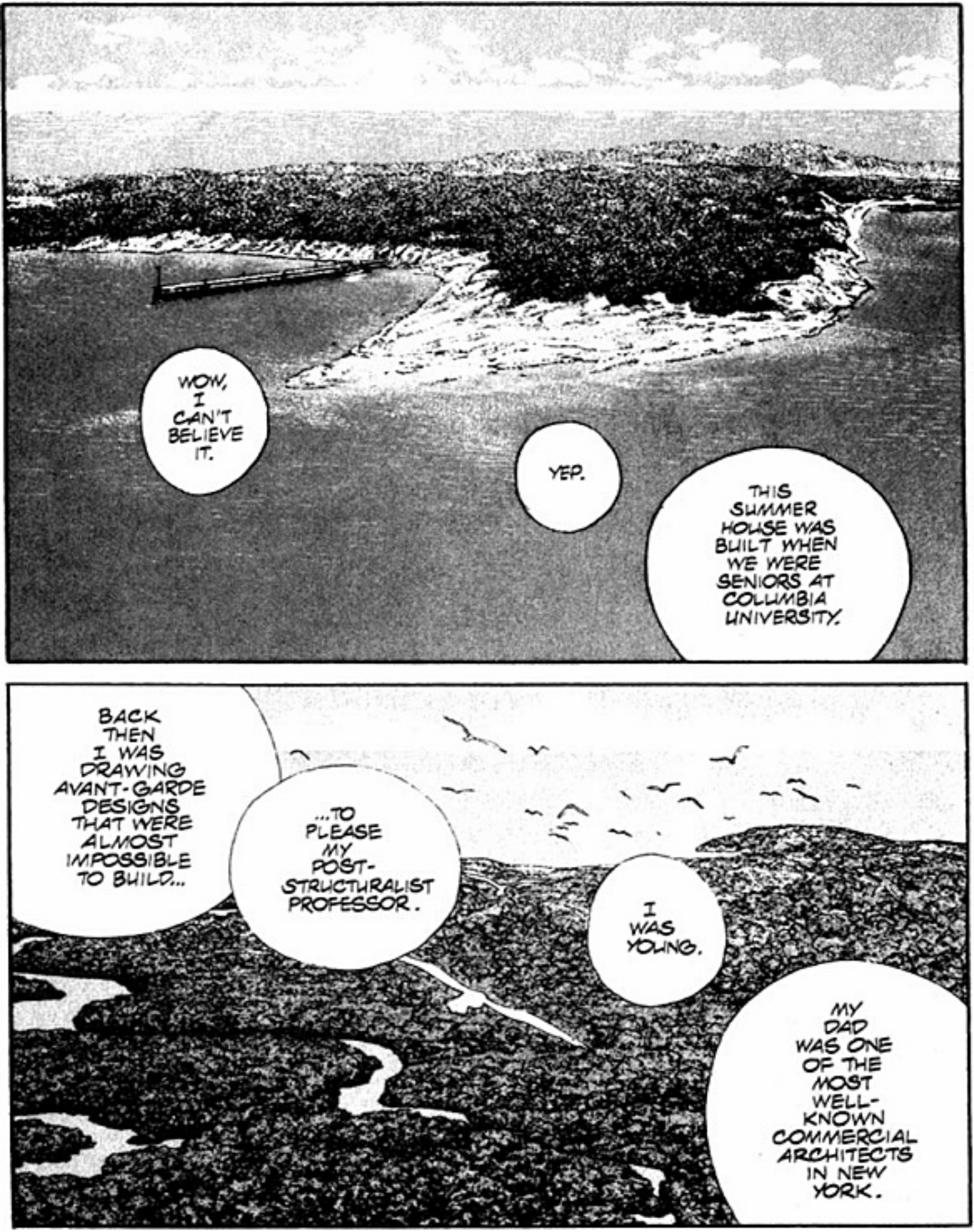

YOU WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE.
MY EX...
...THREW ME OUT ON THE STREET.
BUT NOW YOU CAN BUY MEN FOR SEX, RIGHT?
HA HA HA!
AND WHO CARES IF I DO?
WHAT'S PAST IS PAST.
I LIVE IN THE PRESENT.
NO ONE CAN PREDICT HAPPINESS.
YOU JUST TAKE IT AS IT COMES.
THAT'S RIGHT.
AND I'M HAPPY.

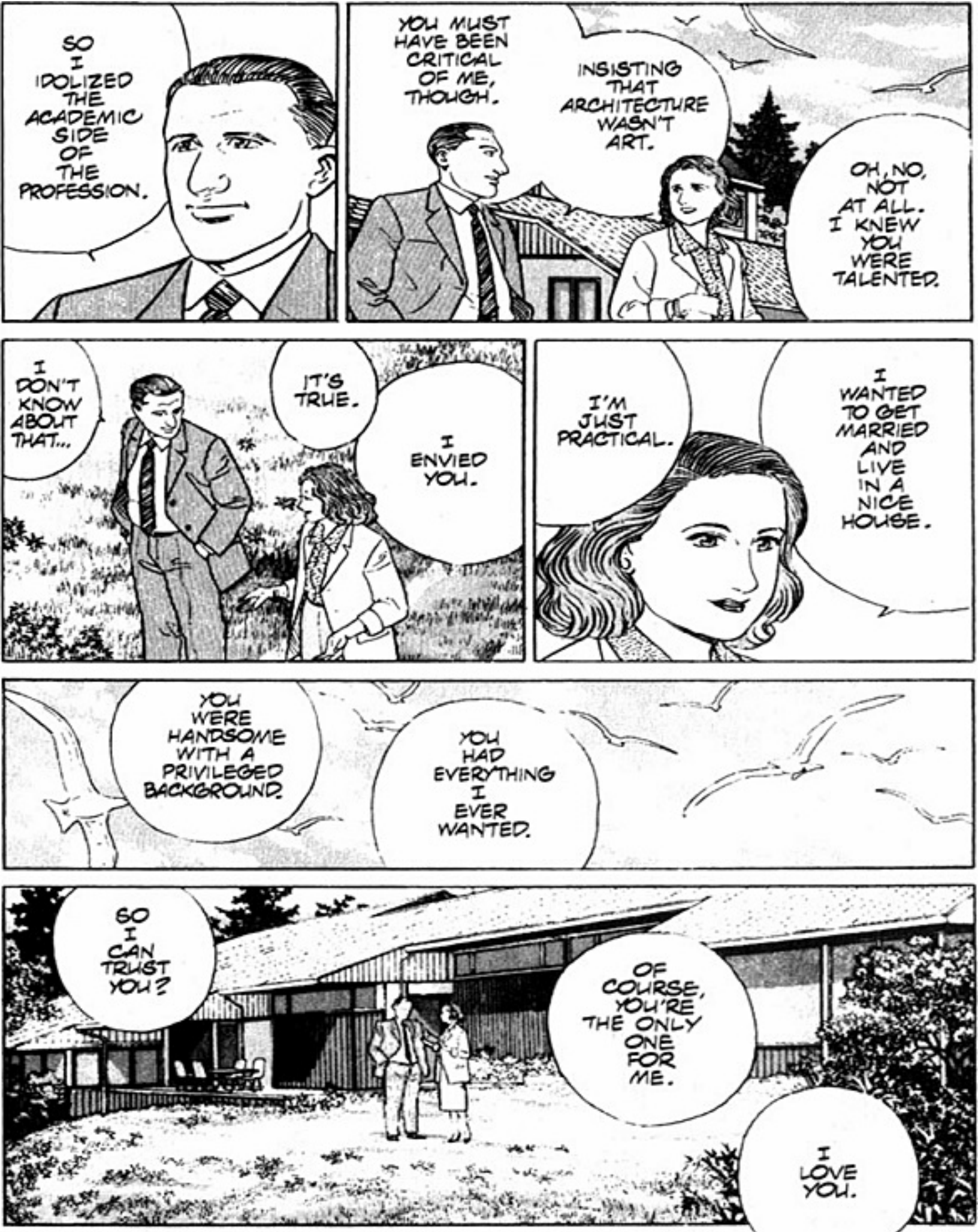
IT'S EASY TO DECEIVE YOURSELF AND FORGET OTHERS GAIN AND SUFFER FROM YOUR ACTIONS.
HAPPINESS MIGHT BE BEAUTIFUL WHEN IT'S YOURS.
...
BUT AS SOON AS YOU STOP SENSING HOW OTHERS FEEL YOU BEGIN TO ROT.
KUKI
HA HA HA!
HA HAHA HA!
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN CHANGE ME, THEN CHANGE ME, MR. ZEN MASTER.
I'LL PUT A SPELL ON YOU, THEN.
HOW NICE.


I WILL TURN YOU BACK INTO THE NAIVE YOUNG GIRL FROM VERMONT YOU ONCE WERE.
THE PEARLS ARE FAKE, BUT THE FEELINGS ARE REAL.
THIS WAS THE NECKLACE YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO RECEIVE ON CHRISTMAS FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.
...
CHAK-NNNNG
TUG

HEY, BROTHER.
CAN YOU SEE THOSE TWO?
VIETNAM
69 - 70
QUANG - TRI
THEY'RE BACK IN VERMONT
...LYING UNDER THE SNOW, ASLEEP IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS.

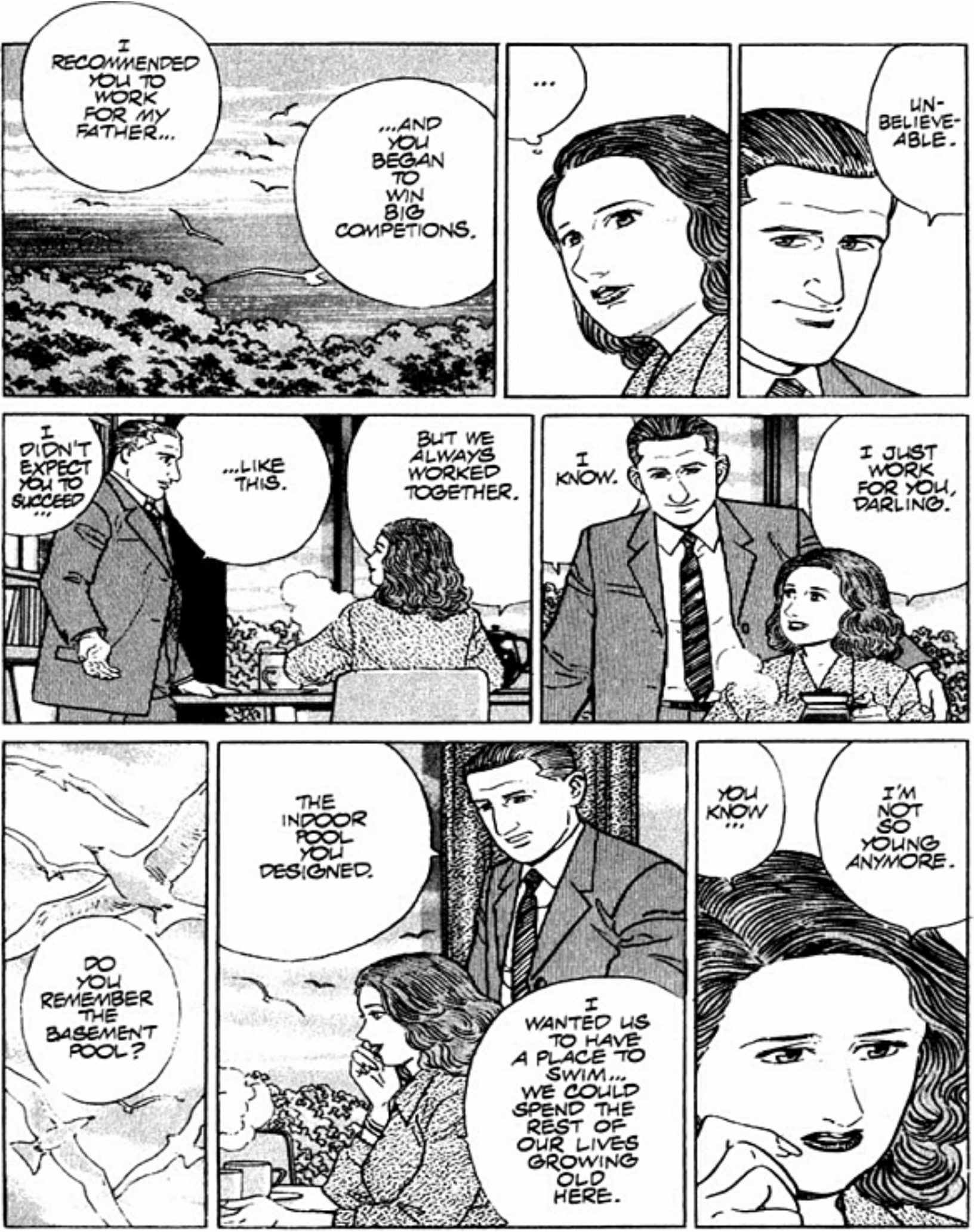
Chapter 7: A BASEMENT


WOW, I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
YEP.
THIS SUMMER HOUSE WAS BUILT WHEN WE WERE SENIORS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.
BACK THEN I WAS DRAWING AVANT-GARDE DESIGNS THAT WERE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BUILD...
...TO PLEASE MY POST-STRUCTURALIST PROFESSOR.
I WAS YOUNG.
MY DAD WAS ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTS IN NEW YORK.


SO I IDOLIZED THE ACADEMIC SIDE OF THE PROFESSION.
YOU MUST HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF ME, THOUGH.
INSISTING THAT ARCHITECTURE WASN'T ART.
OH, NO, NOT AT ALL. I KNEW YOU WERE TALENTED.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...
IT'S TRUE.
I ENVIED YOU.
I'M JUST PRACTICAL.
I WANTED TO GET MARRIED AND LIVE IN A NICE HOUSE.
YOU WERE HANDSOME WITH A PRIVILEGED BACKGROUND.
YOU HAD EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED.
SO I CAN TRUST YOU?
OF COURSE, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE FOR ME.
I LOVE YOU.

MY FATHER...
...JUST BOUGHT AN ISLAND IN MAINE.
WOW.
THAT'S AMAZING.
HE WANTS ME TO DESIGN A SUMMER HOUSE FOR THE ISLAND.
THAT'S WONDERFUL!
IT WILL DO WONDERS FOR YOUR CAREER. HE WANTS TO SHOW YOU OFF AS THE NEXT UP-AND-COMING ARCHITECT!
NO, BETTY...
...THAT'S NOT IT.
WHAT?
HE WANTS TO SEE IF I'M WORTH ANY-THING.
I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

YOU DON'T KNOW MY FATHER.
HE CAN'T STAND PEOPLE WHO CAN'T MAKE MONEY.
WHAT'S WRONG?
I'M AFRAID OF HIM.
...
ALL RIGHT, THEN...
...I'LL HELP YOU.
BETTY...
MY FATHER LOVED THE LOOK OF THIS HOUSE. BUT YOU DESIGNED IT, INSTEAD OF ME.
YOU UNDERSTOOD HIS TASTES.
I WAS LUCKY.
NO, YOU REALLY ARE TALENTED.


I RECOMMENDED YOU TO WORK FOR MY FATHER...
...AND YOU BEGAN TO WIN BIG COMPETIONS.
...
UN-BELIEVE-ABLE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO SUCCEED ...
...LIKE THIS.
BUT WE ALWAYS WORKED TOGETHER.
I KNOW.
I JUST WORK FOR YOU, DARLING.
DO YOU REMEMBER THE BASEMENT POOL?
THE INDOOR POOL YOU DESIGNED.
I WANTED US TO HAVE A PLACE TO SWIM... WE COULD SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES GROWING OLD HERE.
YOU KNOW ...
I'M NOT SO YOUNG ANYMORE.

I KNOW THAT.
I'M ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT YOU.
BETTY ?
Hmm.
Oh, GORDON.
SHHP
GHKK
WHO

I'M FINE WITHOUT YOU NOW, THOUGH.

HM?
WHO COULD THAT BE?
WHO'D COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?!

YES, WHAT IS IT?
THIS IS A PRIVATE ISLAND I DON'T RECALL ASKING ANYONE TO COME HERE.
I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH BETTY STEWART.
BETTY ?
WHAT KIND OF APPOINT-MENT?
I WAS TO DELIVER THIS PAINTING ...
...HERE TODAY.
I SEE.
BETTY WENT FOR A WALK, SO SHE'S OUT.
I CAN WAIT.
...
IT'S AN IMPORTANT PAINTING.

TUNTUK
TOK
MY NAME'S GORDON ALEXANDER.
PLEASE.
CALL ME BENKEI.
BENKEI?
IT IS THE NAME OF AN ANCIENT, FEARLESS HERO IN JAPAN.
I SEE.
I'VE HEARD THAT THE JAPANESE ASSUME DEATH COMES FIRST INSTEAD OF LIFE, THAT THEY SEE IT ALL BACKWARDS.

BY CONSIDERING LIFE TO BE MEANINGLESS ...
...THEY CAN ASSUAGE THEIR FEAR OF DEATH.
...
BOTH LIFE AND DEATH ARE POWERFULLY PRESENT.
THE DEAD CAN COME BACK ...
...AND MAKE US FEAR FOR OUR LIVES.
...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ONE.

THE SUN IS SETTING.
I'M GOING TO FIND BETTY.
...
SHE WALKS AROUND THE ENTIRE ISLAND. IT'S A LONG WALK.
I THINK YOU SHOULD GET GOING.
VERY WELL, THEN.
I WILL COME BY TOMOR-ROW.
...
WHAT KIND OF PAINTING DID BETTY ORDER?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE A LOOK?
...
NO.
I'LL SAVE IT FOR TOMORROW, HA HA HA!

RRRRRR
SHE'LL BE FOUND TOMORROW. SHOULD CAUSE QUITE A STIR.
FSSHHH
SHUD
whew.

EEEHHHHH!
YOU FELL INTO A DEPRESSION OVER YOUR DESIGN FOR THE NEXT COMPETITION.
YOU FELT THE LIMITS OF YOUR TALENT.
SO YOU COMMITTED SUICIDE ON THIS ISLAND, WHERE YOU DESIGNED YOUR FIRST BUILDING.
BETTY.
YOU WERE JUST LIKE MY DAD.
YOU WERE TALENTED, TOUGH, AND HAD NO QUALMS ABOUT HURTING OTHERS WITH YOUR TALENT.
I COULDN'T HELP IT.

HM?
THAT'S ODD. THE LIGHT'S ON.

CHAK

klik
klik
klik

DAMN IT!
WHAT'S GOING ON?

THUD

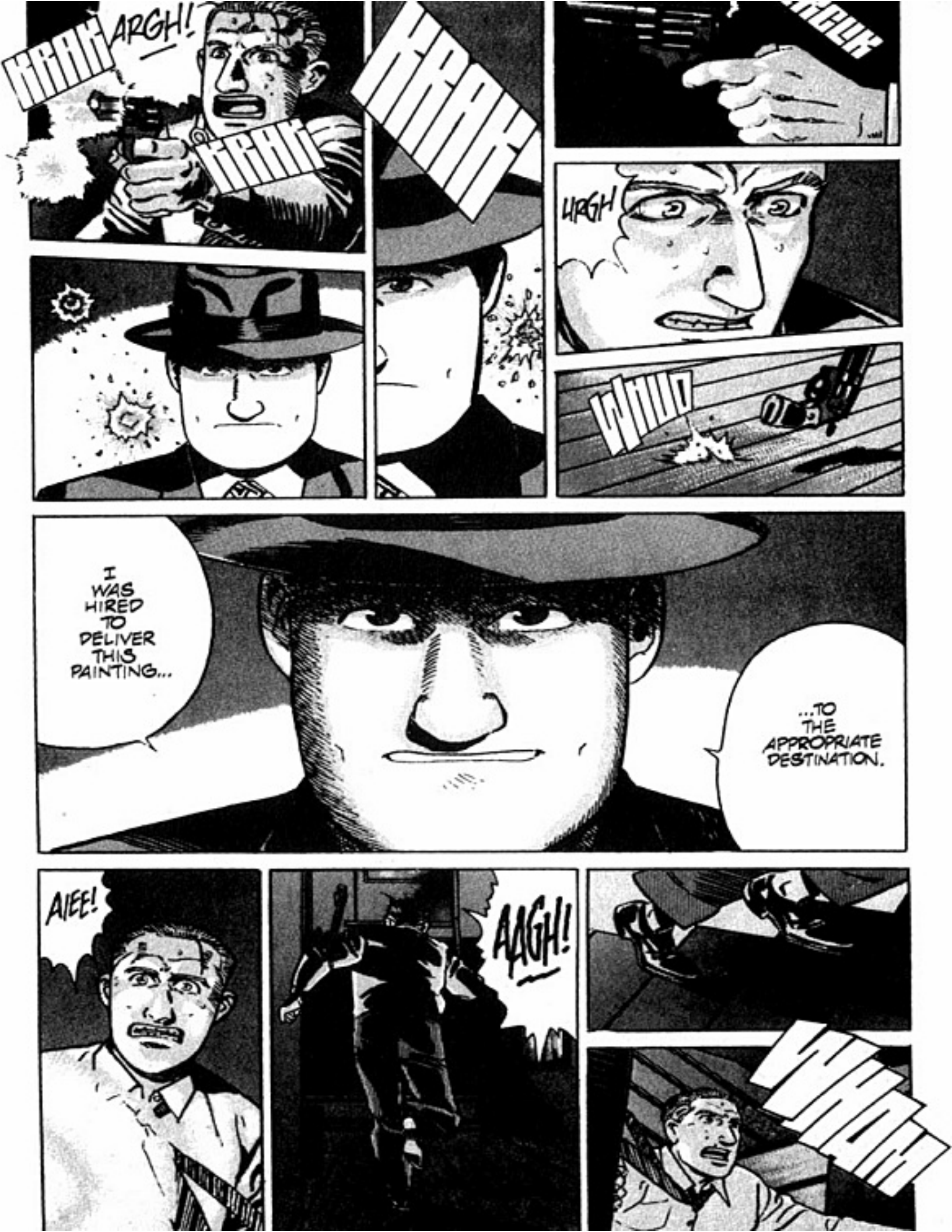
NO!

KA-CHIK

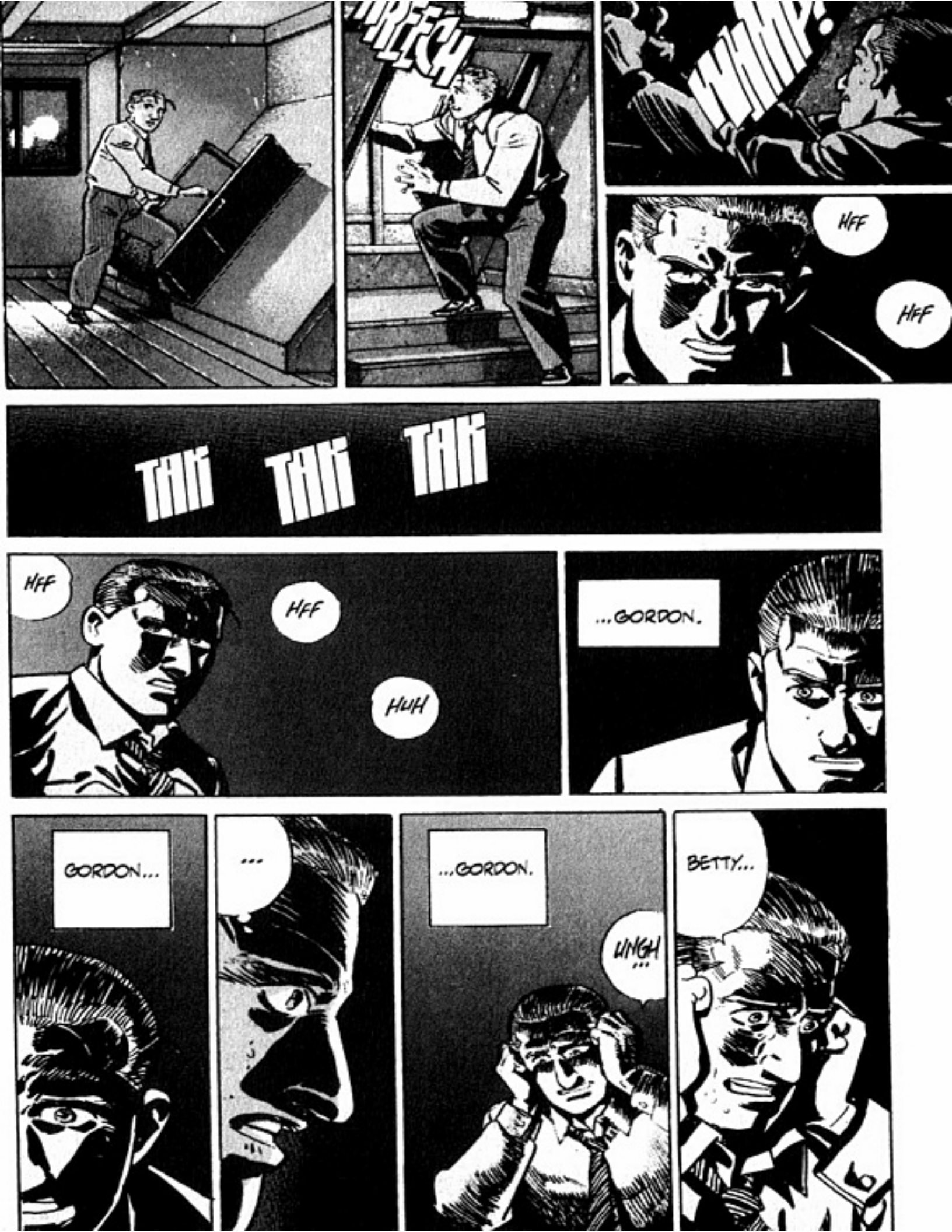
WHO'S THERE?

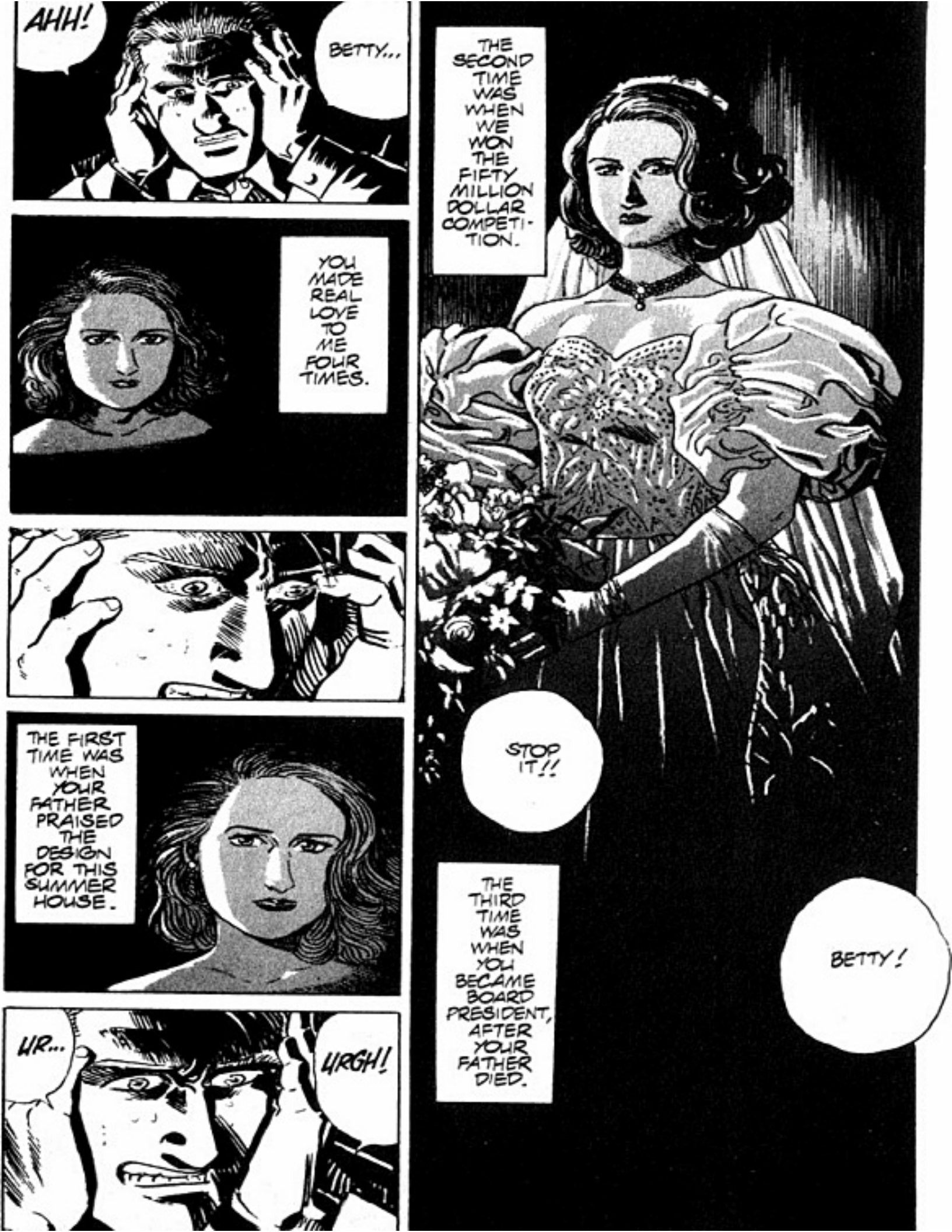
BETTY!
BEAM
BEAM
BEAM
BEAM

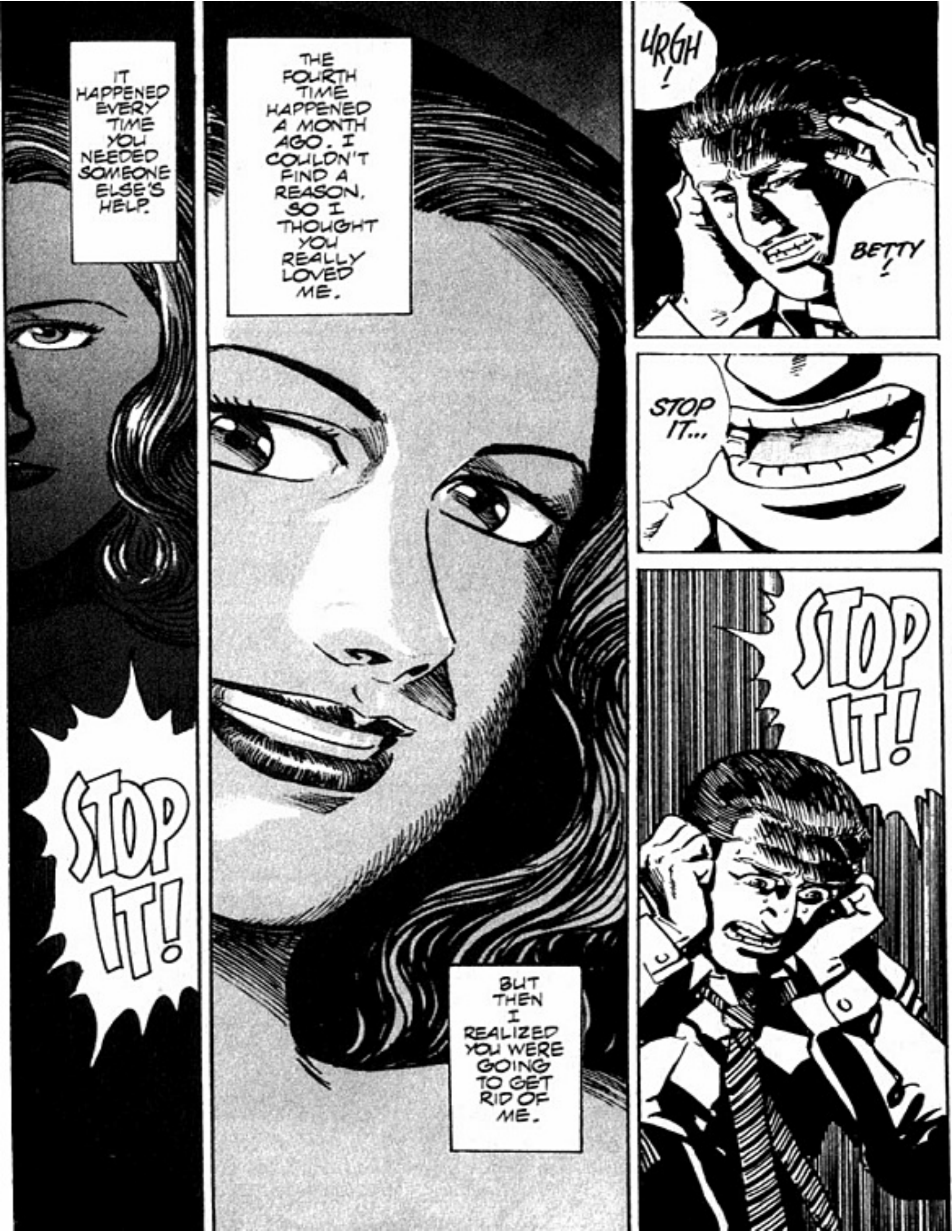
W-WHAT'S THIS?
TAK TAK TAK
!


KRAK
ARGH!
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
URGH
WHUD
I WAS HIRED TO DELIVER THIS PAINTING...
...TO THE APPROPRIATE DESTINATION.
AIEE!
AAGH!
KRAK

CLUD!
HFF
HFF
HFF
HFF
TAK
TAK
TAK
AIEE!
ARGH!
HFF
AHH
HFF
HFF
HFF
HFF

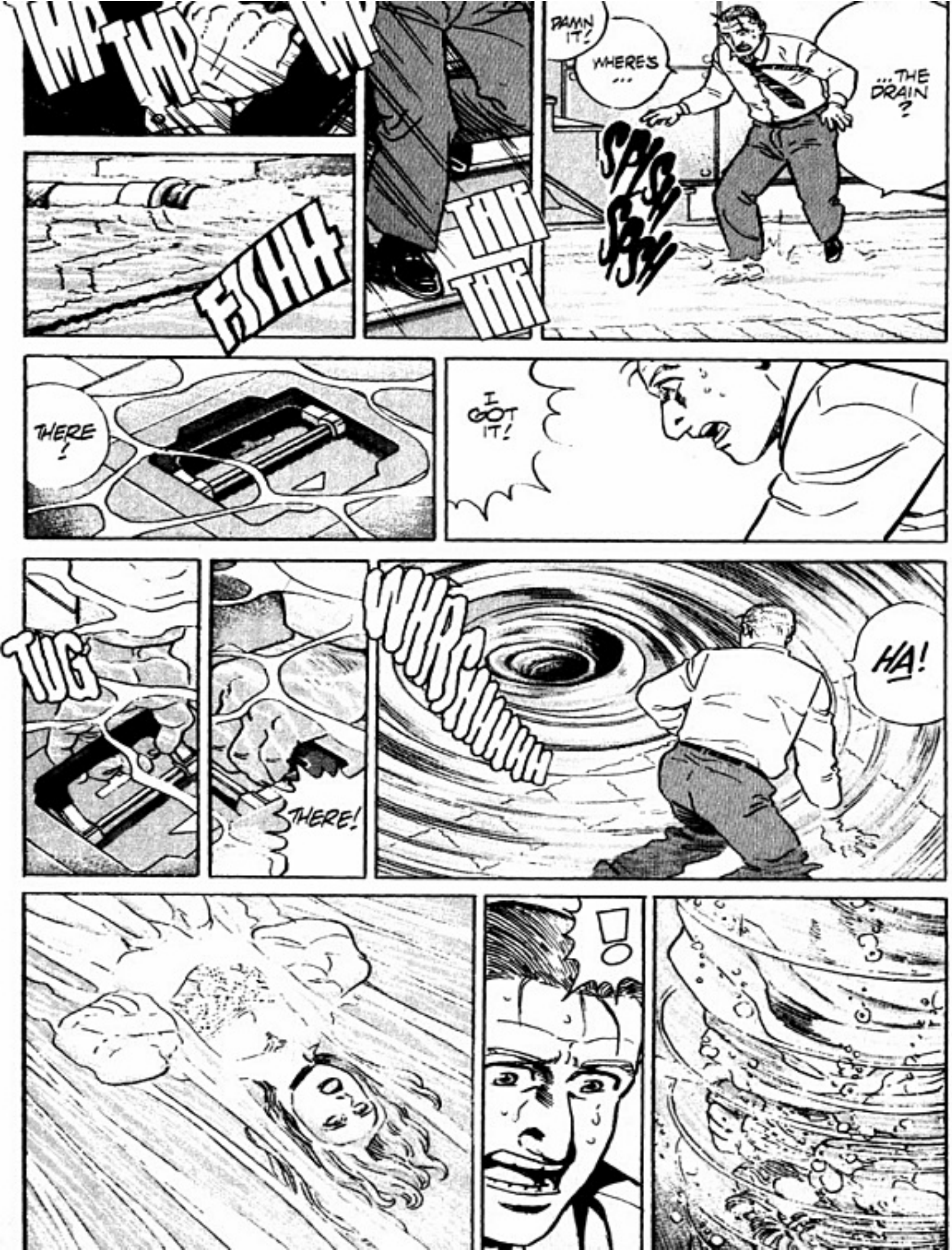

PRTECH
WHAM!
HFF
HFF
TAK TAK TAK
HFF
HFF
HUH
...GORDON.
GORDON...
...
...GORDON.
UNGH...
BETTY...


AHH!
BETTY...
YOU MADE REAL LOVE TO ME FOUR TIMES.
THE FIRST TIME WAS WHEN YOUR FATHER PRAISED THE DESIGN FOR THIS SUMMER HOUSE.
UR...
URGH!
THE SECOND TIME WAS WHEN WE WON THE FIFTY MILLION DOLLAR COMPETI-TION.
STOP IT!!
THE THIRD TIME WAS WHEN YOU BECAME BOARD PRESIDENT, AFTER YOUR FATHER DIED.
BETTY!


IT HAPPENED EVERY TIME YOU NEEDED SOMEONE ELSE'S HELP.
STOP IT!
THE FOURTH TIME HAPPENED A MONTH AGO. I COULDN'T FIND A REASON, SO I THOUGHT YOU REALLY LOVED ME.
BUT THEN I REALIZED YOU WERE GOING TO GET RID OF ME.
URGH!
BETTY!
STOP IT...
STOP IT!

TAK
WAUD !
CHUD
PSHAH
YAGH!
GLUG GLUG GLUG GLUG GLUG
AAAIEEEE
THP THP
OPEN UP!

PLEASE!
I HAVE A MESSAGE FROM BETTY.
THP THP THP
"I LOVED YOU TOO MUCH."
EEHHH
AAAA...
I'LL PAY YOU ANYTHING! I PROMISE!
THP THP THP
PLEASE ...HELP ME!
THP THP THP


THP THP
FJSHH
THR THR
DAMN IT!
WHERE'S ...
...THE DRAIN?
SPLSH
THERE!
I GOT IT!
TUG
THERE!
WHRSHHHH
HA!
!

SHOT
SPLSH
AH!
MNNN...
GLUG GLUG GLUG
AAAA

THE
END

About the Creators

JINPACHI MORI was born in 1958 in Nagasaki, Japan. He is a manga writer and essayist, and his photography appears regularly in his monthly column "Tabi suru Kamera" (Journey Camera) in *Be-Pal* magazine, published by Shogakukan, Inc. He recently finished writing the serialized folklore-manga *Tajikarao*.

JIRO TANIGUCHI was born in 1947 in Tottori, Japan. After high school in 1966, he became an assistant to the professional comics artist Kyota Ishikawa. His previous works include *Unprotected City, Rindra, Trouble Is My Business, The Age of Bocchan, Blanca,* and *Hotel Harbour View,* the latter published in English translation by Viz Communications.